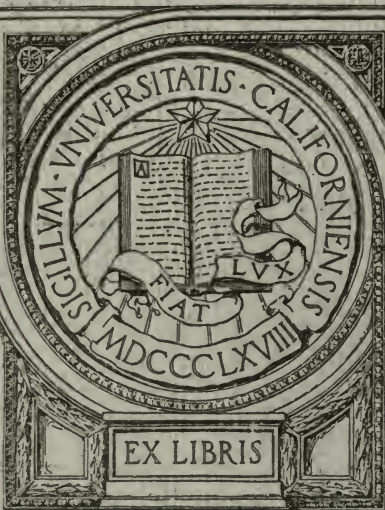




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A POPULAR INTRODUCTION TO THE  
NEW TESTAMENT.



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A POPULAR INTRODUCTION  
TO THE  
NEW TESTAMENT.

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UNIVERSITY OF  
CAMBRIDGE

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## P R E F A C E.



THE present volume has its groundwork in twelve Essays written last year for the *Clergyman's Magazine*. Only one or two of those papers had been printed, before the writer was urged, from several quarters, to let the whole, when complete, be put into a separate form. The publishers consented that some additions should be made, both in the text, and by means of notes, especially in that portion of the work which deals with St. Paul's Epistles. It is hoped that the book will

thus be found to possess a degree of completeness which it was impossible for it to have in the limited space allowed by the Magazine.

CAMBRIDGE,

*March, 1883.*

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## CHAPTER I.

### PRELIMINARY.

THE New Testament. What is it? We now regard it as a single book. We speak of it in the singular number, and lose sight, by so doing, of some most important facts in its history. The New Testament is not one book, but seven-and-twenty pieces, the work of eight or nine authors, writing, it is true, on the same subject-matter, but writing at different times, nearly always for different readers, for the most part under differing circumstances, and so from different points of view. And we need to bear this constantly in mind if the character of all its teaching is to be properly understood. It is worth while, then, to know how these several pieces were brought into one collection.

It was not done in a brief time. Nearly four hundred years of the Christian era have rolled

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by before we find a list<sup>1</sup> of New Testament books exactly corresponding with that in our Bibles. During that period these writings had been circulated singly, or in special collections of a few pieces together ; and not till A.D. 397 did the whole volume, as we have it, receive the sanction of the Church, and become recognized as the whole authoritative literature of Christian revelation.

When our Lord was taken up into heaven, His Apostles and disciples began to preach and to form Christian congregations, at first in Palestine, then in more distant countries. It was for the guidance of these infant congregations that the earliest writings of the New Testament were composed. The first in date are almost certainly some of St. Paul's Epistles, most likely the first letter to the Thessalonians.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The first list which was accepted by the authority of the Church was that of the Council of Laodicea (A.D. 363), but the books contained in it are specially termed "those that should be read in the church." The Apocalypse was therefore not included, but it is found in the list of the Council of Carthage (A.D. 397).

<sup>2</sup> Written about A.D. 52, so that more than twenty years elapsed between the death of Christ and the issue of any portion of the New Testament. Of course many portions of Gospel narrative had before this been taken down from the lips of the Apostles, but no complete Gospel (unless it be perhaps St. Matthew's) existed at so early a date as the first Apostolic letters.

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Of such letters a very large part of the New Testament volume is composed. Twenty-two of the pieces which it contains are of this character; for the Apocalypse, though having a special subject of its own, is St. John's letter to the seven Churches of Asia, among which a large portion of his life's labour was spent.

The historic part of the New Testament volume would not be needed till a later time than the date of the early epistles. The Gospels, we learn from one of them (Luke i. 1-4), were composed when those who were best able to tell the life-story of their Master had found it expedient to send forth with authority the history which for a long time they had published only by oral teaching; the Acts was written, perhaps, between St. Paul's first and second visit to Rome.

The whole of the Christian Scriptures were written originally in Greek; for though there exists a tradition of a Hebrew original of St. Matthew, the evidence in support of it cannot be called satisfactory.<sup>1</sup> The Christian books were intended to circulate through all the Churches, and so the language in which they were produced was that which formed the

<sup>1</sup> On this point see p. 28.

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greatest medium of inter-communication at the time of their appearance. And they are preserved to us still in Greek. But though we have these words of the Apostles and their fellows in the speech in which they were composed, we have no writing which dates from the Apostles' time, no autograph of any portion. The oldest manuscript which we possess was written, at the earliest, some three hundred years after the death of Christ. The actual letters of the Apostles were no doubt long treasured, and oft perused by those to whom they were first sent, and this is one reason why none of them have survived; but while they were being used, copies of them were sure to be made by the possessors, for use in other Churches, and such copies would be circulated from a very early date.

Accordingly, we find that Justin Martyr, who was born near Sichein, in Palestine, at the end of the first century, was acquainted with the four Gospels, four of St. Paul's epistles, the Epistle to the Hebrews, and the Apocalypse; while Tertullian, who flourished in Northern Africa at the end of the second century, knew of the Gospels, the first Epistle of St. John, the first of St. Peter, the Epistle of St. Jude, thirteen Epistles of St. Paul, and the Apocalypse. Thus

it is clear that, although not included in one volume, as the authoritative documents of the Church of Christ, till A.D. 397, the greater portion of the New Testament was widely diffused at a much earlier period.

We know, moreover, that some of the apostolic writings have been lost. St. Paul had written a letter to the Corinthians at an earlier date than that of our present first epistle (1 Cor. v. 9). He also mentions (Col. iv. 16) an epistle to the Laodiceans, which we do not possess. St. John speaks (3 John 9) of another letter of his own, and St. Jude (3) mentions his intention to write a more general letter than that which we now possess. If he ever did so, it has not come down to us.

But to make copies and preserve documents was not so easy in early Christian days as it has since become. The oldest MSS. of the Greek Testament are written in a sort of small capital letters (called *uncials*), without any division of one word from another. No regard is paid in them to anything, except to keep roughly the same number of letters in each line, and to do this sometimes a single letter of a word is placed in one line, while all the remainder stands in the next. When these MSS. were made, the art of writing must have been

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confined to professional scribes. This may have been an advantage. It may have helped to keep the copies more free from errors than they otherwise would have been. But even the best scribes make mistakes.

The writing of MSS. in uncial characters continued down to the ninth century. After that date another style of writing began to prevail. It is called *cursive*, because it has more of a *running* character, being written in small letters, and having the words separated from each other. Hence the MSS. which we possess are styled respectively *uncials* and *cursives*.<sup>1</sup> Of the uncials (so far as is yet discovered), only one has survived which contains all the books of the New Testament entire. This is the famous *Codex Sinaiticus*, indicated in critical notes by the Hebrew letter **ס**. Of the cursives, about thirty (out of a total of nearly a thousand) have come down to us with all the text complete. Several of the uncials and many of the cursives contain only a few fragmentary pieces.

The oldest uncial MS. which we possess is the *Codex Vaticanus*, known as B. This was

<sup>1</sup> In critical notes it has become customary to distinguish the *uncials* by capital letters, the *cursives* by Arabic numerals.

written about A.D. 340. But before this copy came into existence, the text must have been subject to many copyings, and the making of copies always involves the rise of errors in the text. The discovery of MSS., therefore, and especially such as are of an ancient date, is of great importance ; for by comparison of various copies errors may be corrected, and a near approach made to the exact words which were spoken by our Lord, or written by His Apostles. But it is only in very recent years that such comparison has been possible. The Codex Sinaiticus was only made accessible to critics in 1862, and it is barely half a century<sup>1</sup> since scholars first began to go back to the oldest MSS. for criticism of the text of the New Testament. Such criticism has now, however, been performed with all the completeness which the available resources make possible, and very many of the changes in the language of the recently issued Revised Version are due, not to any desire to change the A.V., but to alterations in the Greek text which examination of MSS. has shown to be necessary.

Since there is a chance of error in every fresh

<sup>1</sup> The text of Lachmann dates from 1831 ; other very distinguished labourers in the same field have been Tischendorf, Tregelles and Dr. Scrivener.



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transcription, the copy of a copy is more likely still to have its mistakes. So the nearer we can come to an early transcript, the more likely are we to obtain a correct text. The date when a MS. was copied is not, however, always an index of its correctness; for though made in the seventh century, if it were well copied from a MS. of the third or fourth, it may be more correct than others which came into existence a century earlier, but were drawn from less accurate sources. But lest alarm should be excited by the mention of frequent mistakes in MSS., it should be borne in mind that a very large proportion of the variations here spoken of consist in the changed order of words, and not in any alteration of the words themselves, and often in trifling points of orthography. So largely is this the case, that, in the opinion of the latest critics of the sacred text, there is not more than one word in a thousand about which there can be any serious question of what is the true reading.<sup>1</sup> The amount of textual corruption which need ultimately remain is therefore very small.

But the text from which our Authorized Version was translated was derived, as will be

<sup>1</sup> Westcott and Hort's *Introduction*, p. 2.



shewn hereafter, from cursive MSS. only, and those of a late date, so that it inherited the defects of many generations. And many changes will be perceived in the Revised Version which have been made because there is now in existence a more accurate Greek text than that which was in the hands of the translators in 1611. Errors crept into the text in various ways. Thus, before printing was discovered, and when MSS. were few in number, the possessor of one often wrote down on the margin such notes as seemed to him to be useful to the reader. At times he would desire to bring together parts of a narrative which were separated in the original, at times to explain a word that seemed to need explanation. In this way, in Acts ix. 5, the words, "It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks," have been introduced from xxvi. 14. In the latter verse they are found in the oldest MSS., but not in the former, into which either the scribe, misled by a faulty memory, has inserted them, or they have been written on the margin of some copy, and at the next transcription have found their way into the text. So too of words in the way of explanation. In Heb. vi. 10, the Revised Version rightly gives "God is not unrighteous to forget your work and the *love* which ye shewed." The Author-

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ized Version had "labour of love," an addition drawn from 1 Thess. i. 3, where that expression is found in the earliest copies, and from whence it was added on the margin of some MS., to make more clear, as the reader thought, what was meant by the word "love" in the letter to the Hebrews. To remove such intruded words, and leave them only in their original places, while it takes away nothing from the teaching of Scripture, makes our New Testament volume a closer representation of the words as first written.

Besides the two uncial MSS. already mentioned (B and  $\aleph$ ), there are two more which hold places of foremost authority. These are A, the *Codex Alexandrinus*, in the British Museum; and C, the *Codex Ephraemi*, in the National Library at Paris. Both these are of the fifth century. There exist besides about a score of uncials, some of them, however, being very fragmentary.

The cursive MSS. date from the ninth to the sixteenth century, and it is easy to understand that as soon as cursive writing became common, no new copies would be made from the uncials; the cursive hand was so much easier to read. Thus, after a time, the uncial MSS. were allowed to slip out of sight, and it was not

until the middle of the seventeenth century that any attention was again paid to them,<sup>1</sup> and then it was only to chronicle some select readings from two or three of their number. A little more study (but not much) was bestowed on these older records in the eighteenth century;<sup>2</sup> but it is by the students of the present century that the most diligent labour has been spent upon this work, so that now the whole evidence which the uncial texts afford is accessible to all who wish to examine it.

As a consequence of the oblivion into which the oldest Greek MSS. had fallen, it came to pass that the Greek texts, which were sent forth soon after the invention of printing, were based only on the evidence of cursive MSS., and those few in number and of a late date. The first printed Greek Testament was that of Erasmus, published at Basle in 1516. Another text appeared in 1522, in the "Complutensian Polyglot," published by Cardinal Ximenes, at Alcalá, in Spain. Hardly any attempt was

<sup>1</sup> The attention of English scholars was directed to this subject most probably by the present of the Alexandrian MS. to Charles I., which was sent by the Patriarch of Constantinople in 1628.

<sup>2</sup> The most noted workers at this subject were Bengel and Griesbach.

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afterwards made to bring to more accuracy the texts thus first issued, and after a time a beautifully printed edition of the text of Erasmus, sent forth by the Elzevirs, from their famous press at Leyden, became the generally accepted form of the Greek text; and in the preface to the second edition of this text (1633), there is found the expression, "*Textus ab omnibus receptus*," from which the name "Received Text" arose. From that "Received Text" our Authorized Version was made; and it is because of the many, though often very slight, differences between that text and the earliest uncial MSS. that a very large portion of the alterations made in the Revised Version have been rendered necessary.

But besides the MS. aids towards obtaining a more correct text of the New Testament, mention should also be made of the earliest translations or "versions." These, though not recording the text, often bear definite witness to what the Greek must have been which the translator had before him, and so constitute valuable subsidiary evidence. Such versions have been preserved to us, wholly or in part, in Latin, Syriac, and the languages of Egypt. In Latin there were two or three somewhat varying versions early circulated in Northern

Africa and in Italy.<sup>1</sup> These were improved upon by Jerome, who, in A.D. 383, made his translation, which is generally known as the Vulgate. This came into common use, though the wandering memories of scribes have brought back into it, here and there, in the lapse of time, many readings from the older Latin which it was meant to supersede. The authoritative edition of the Vulgate is that issued by Pope Clement VIII. in 1592.

Of Syriac versions, the first to be named is the Peshito, or *simple* Syriac. For a long time this was thought to be the most ancient Syriac translation; but of late years traces have been discovered of an earlier version by the publication of a MS. of the Syriac Gospels,<sup>2</sup> which is in the British Museum. We may conclude, from what has been brought to light concerning the dates of these translations, that portions of the New Testament were translated into Syriac quite as early as into Latin. A later, but very literal, Syriac version is known as the Philoxenian, from the name of the person<sup>3</sup> for

<sup>1</sup> They are known as the "Old Latin" versions.

<sup>2</sup> Usually spoken of as the "Curetonian Gospels" because they were published by the late Dr. Cureton.

<sup>3</sup> This was Philoxenus, Bishop of Hierapolis in Syria (A.D. 485-518). This version is only fragmentary, and it is not known whether it contained all the books of the N.T.

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whom it was made. This was produced in A.D. 508. We do not possess the actual text which was supplied to Philoxenus, but a revision thereof made about a century later.<sup>1</sup> A third Syriac text is derived from the Gospel Lectionaries. It is known as the Jerusalem Syriac, and, like the Philoxenian, appears to be based on the earlier translations.

The earliest Egyptian version, known as the Memphitic or Coptic, must have been produced in the main before the close of the second century. This is the version of Lower Egypt. That of Upper Egypt, called the Sahidic, is thought to be nearly as ancient as the Coptic; while the third, the Bashmuric version, is held to date from the third century.

It will be seen, therefore, that where the evidence from translations is such as can be used for a revision of the Greek text, we have in some of these versions a testimony concerning the original words of the New Testament, dating from a time antecedent to the production of the earliest Greek MS. which has survived. Hence comes the importance of these transla-

<sup>1</sup> The revision was made by Thomas Harclensis, a monk of Alexandria (A.D. 616), and hence it is called the Harclean Syriac.

tions where they testify clearly to the text which they are intended to represent.

A further and somewhat different kind of evidence is drawn from the writings of the early Christian Fathers. Sometimes, however, the quotations which they make from the original are made somewhat laxly, and in such a way as not to indicate conclusively what Greek words they actually read. Hence this kind of testimony requires much judgment for its right employment in the revision of the Greek text. Where, however, as in the case of Chrysostom, Theodoret, and Cyril of Alexandria, the Fathers have left continuous commentaries on portions of the New Testament Scriptures, we can gather from them some satisfactory evidence about the earliest MS. readings, though the results of labour in this field are not so large as the amount of surviving patristic literature might lead us to expect.

Such are the chief sources at present available from which to seek an exact restoration of the original words of the New Testament. It remains to speak briefly of our English translations.

Our Saxon forefathers, like the rest of Western Christendom, had only portions of the Bible in the vernacular. The Vulgate was



in the hands of the clergy, the lay people knew mainly the Psalms and the Gospels in their native speech.<sup>1</sup> Hence the Psalms have come down to us in Saxon from the eighth century, while translations of the Gospels into that language date probably from an earlier time. As we draw nearer to the days of Wycliffe, we again find the Psalms rendered into the popular language by Rolle, the hermit of Hampole, and by others ; and a metrical English Psalter exists, of a date earlier than A.D. 1300.<sup>2</sup> It was not, however, till Wycliffe's Bible appeared, that the whole of either the New or Old Testament was given to the English in one uniform version. The Bible known by the name of Wycliffe was

<sup>1</sup> Ælfric's rendering of the Pentateuch, Joshua, Judges, Esther, Job, with parts of the history of Kings and the books of Judith and Maccabees into Anglo-Saxon, has in part been preserved to us. His work is marked, however, by many omissions and abridgements, and its existence does not alter the truth of what is stated above, that the Psalms and Gospels were the parts of Scripture most known.

<sup>2</sup> The version of the Psalms (date about 1330) assigned to William of Shoreham, is not by that author. It is found in a MS. in the British Museum (Add. MSS. 17,376), in which are some poems by Shoreham, but a comparison of the language shews that the Psalms are not his. Specimens of this version, and also of Rolle's, may be seen in the Preface to Forshall and Madden's edition of the Wycliffite versions.



completed about the year A.D. 1383. The New Testament, Wycliffe's own work, was finished three years earlier, and with his translation he joined a version of the Old Testament and the Apocrypha, which had been nearly completed by his friend, Nicholas Hereford, before persecution obliged him to flee from England. This Bible (like all the Saxon and English versions which preceded it), was a translation from the Latin of the Vulgate, and of course bears many marks that it is the version of a version. Being made a full century before the invention of printing, it was never circulated except in MS.

It was not until the discovery of printing had given a new impulse to the scholarship of the West that there appeared a man able to draw from the original tongues of both the Old and New Testaments. Before, however, the new art, which should multiply copies without limit, was half a century old, God raised up one who has stamped his impress on the English Bible so completely that no time seems likely to efface it. William Tyndale, born about the time when the first printed book came forth in England, early conceived the thought of making a new translation of the Bible. At first he tried to compass the work in his own land. But there was no place for him there. So

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driven abroad, he laboured successively in Hamburg, Cologne, and Worms, at which last-named city, already famous in Reformation history, he put forth two editions of the New Testament in 1525. He published afterwards a translation of the Pentateuch, of the book of Jonah, and of a few selections from the Old Testament, which occur in the Sarum Breviary. Of Tyndale's New Testament, six editions had been issued before the translator gave (A.D. 1536) his life by martyrdom to crown his labours. Yet the hostility exhibited towards his work, and the zeal of those who burnt up the copies, have made Tyndale's New Testament one of the rarest books in the world. Besides what he had printed, Tyndale left translations in manuscript of some other parts of the Old Testament.

The next translator lived under more favourable circumstances. This was Miles Coverdale, afterwards Bishop of Exeter. He had been a fellow-worker with Tyndale, though being far inferior to him in scholarly power. His heart, however, yearned that Englishmen should have the whole Bible in their own tongue. He completed his version in 1535, and times had then so far changed in England, that it was issued with a dedication to King Henry VIII. A

second edition was published two years later, and this was followed in the same year by a composite version, under the name of T Matthew (but being the work of John Rogers, Tyndale's friend, who was soon to be, like him, a martyr). In this Bible was incorporated all that Tyndale had left unprinted of the Old Testament, his New Testament of 1535, and only the remaining portions of the Old Testament and Apocrypha printed from Coverdale.

This was a great advance on all the editions before it, but the mind of Cromwell, the king's vicegerent, longed to bring the English Scriptures to still greater perfection. And no less anxious was Coverdale. So at Cromwell's request he undertook to revise Matthew's Bible; and his work, printed partly in Paris, and the remainder in London, appeared in 1539, and is known as the Great Bible. A copy of this was, by royal injunction, commanded to be set up in every church of the kingdom. In the same year was sent forth another revision of Matthew's Bible, made by a learned lawyer, named Taverner. But the issue of the Great Bible threw this work so much into the shade, that it was soon forgotten. We see, however, that our forefathers had no dread of Bible revision.

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After 1539 we have no English Bible put forth in England for a long time. The exiles from England at Geneva issued, in 1557, a New Testament, which appears to have been the work of Whittingham, Calvin's brother-in-law, and the whole Bible was completed by him and his fellow-labourers in 1560. This Geneva Bible was circulated widely in England, and was held in special esteem as the Bible for home reading, because it was furnished with a marginal commentary.

In 1568, through the exertions of Archbishop Parker, was published what is known as the Bishop's Bible, because several prelates took part in this revision; and in 1611 there appeared what we speak of as the Authorized Version, prepared at the instigation of King James I. Since that time, though some agitation for a new translation was made under the Commonwealth, no public revision had been put forth for 270 years, till the revised New Testament was issued on 17th May, 1881.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS.

THE writers of the first three Gospels deal in the main with the same parts of our Lord's life-history, and hence their writings may be read side by side for illustration of each other. For this reason these Gospels have been called *synoptic*, *i.e.* comprehended in one view. They narrate events which took place for the most part in Galilee and the lands adjacent thereto, and speak of no visit made by Jesus to Jerusalem, except that final one, which was terminated by the Crucifixion. For the history of His other visits to the Holy City, we have only the accounts given in the Gospel of St. John.

As we peruse the synoptic Gospels there are certain questions which can hardly fail to come into our minds. What relation do they bear to each other? In what order were they produced? Did the writers copy at all from one another? Or if not, how can their similarity be accounted for? And how, with so much

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similarity, does it come to pass that there are such great differences?

First of all, the resemblances are so many and so close, that we must admit at once, in spite of the different arrangement of the materials, that what we are reading was in some way drawn by the three Evangelists from a common source. But the differences in their narratives are also very striking. In those portions which are most completely common to all the three Gospels, it will be found that by each writer some things are omitted and some things added which make his form of the history to have a character of its own, different from that of the other two.

This will be plain to any one who makes comparison, for example, of the three accounts of the Transfiguration. In the seven or eight verses devoted to this event by each evangelist, the great lines of the picture are the same in all. Yet St. Matthew alone tells of the shining of the face of Jesus, and that He touched the disciples to rouse them after the vision was over. It is St. Mark alone who compares the whiteness of the Lord's raiment to snow, and adds the graphic detail, "so as no fuller on earth can white them;" while St. Luke is the only one who records that the visit to the mount

of Transfiguration was made for the purpose of private prayer; that Moses and Elias, in their discourse, spake of our Lord's approaching passion, and that the disciples of Jesus were overcome by sleep. Yet amid these and other minor variations, what we may term the salient points of the history, the expression of St. Peter that it was good to be there, and the words spoken by the heavenly voice, are in such close accord that they might be supposed, if standing alone, to have been drawn from the same document, or, at all events, to be different close translations of the same original. Hence some have suggested an original Gospel in Aramaic, as a means of accounting for such exact agreement where it exists. But such near resemblances are but few in each section of the common story, while the variations are numerous. We cannot therefore believe that the form of the synoptic Gospels is to be explained by supposing that the writers had some common materials from which to translate. And in the setting (as we may name it) of the events which he relates, each Evangelist differs so much from his fellows, that it is impossible to conceive that any of the three made, after any sort, a copy from the others.

We are therefore driven to consider the way



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in which the Gospel narrative was first published, to see if that may help us to an explanation. The first converts heard Christ's life-history by word of mouth. After the day of Pentecost the Apostles and disciples went forth preaching, but did not at once set about writing a Gospel. As they preached, they would tell, now of one phase of the Lord's words and works, and now of another, as best suited their purpose, adding such exhortations as seemed needful. That this was so we can see from the Acts of the Apostles. When the hearers of these first Christian sermons became interested, that which they would most desire to remember would be what the Master had said and done. Of these things narratives would from time to time be written ; but as the speakers would not always in the same account preserve exactly the same phraseology, it is easy to see how narratives might become current, varying, within certain limits, in their words. The chief matters, and those on which lessons were to be specially founded, would be kept always very much the same, but the rest of the diction might be modified in various ways. St. Luke tells us, in the first verse of his Gospel, that many such narratives had already been written. And the existence of materials of this kind, and their



employment, according to the judgment of each evangelist, seems alone to account satisfactorily for the characteristics of the first three Gospels. No Evangelist intended to write a complete life of Christ; but each, either guided by his own knowledge (as St. Matthew, who had been an Apostle), or with the help of others (as was probably the case with St. Mark and St. Luke), gathered, from narratives which had been already recorded as they fell at various times from the lips of the first teachers, all that seemed best suited for placing the life and works of Jesus in the light in which the writer desired to display them. That each Evangelist wrote for different hearers, and occupied a different point of view from the others, we shall see as we proceed. That their writings should shew us this difference is but natural. And the variations which appear in parallel portions of these three Gospels are just such as oral teaching, oft repeated, might be expected to exhibit; for we should bear in mind that the oral tradition of the Gospel history was different from any other oral tradition with which we are acquainted. It was not the transmission of a narrative through different mouths, and at distant intervals of time; it was a repetition by the same persons, of the same story, almost

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day by day. And thus, from the preaching of the Apostles, resulted the close resemblances in the separate histories of Jesus. The Gospels, in their variety and in their simplicity, are a true picture of what the first teachers must have spoken; and the differences which we thus accept, in the language used by those who were eye-witnesses of Christ's life, and fitted by His Spirit to be ministers of the Word, are not without their lesson. They tell of unity, but shew that uniformity is by no means necessary thereto.

### *(a) The Gospel according to St. Matthew.*

The writer of the first Gospel has always<sup>1</sup> been identified with Matthew the publican, who was one of the twelve Apostles. A comparison of his Gospel with the others enables us to discover that he was the same person whom St. Mark and St. Luke call Levi, the son of Alphæus. To be known by two names was no unusual thing among the Jews, and often a new name was assumed at some great turning-point of a man's life. The New Testament

<sup>1</sup> To the genuineness of the first Gospel we have abundant testimony in the patristic writings both of the East and West. Passages are quoted from it in the writings of Justin Martyr, Hegesippus, Irenæus, Athenagoras, Clement of Rome, Tertullian and Origen.

history furnishes us with examples, and it is not improbable that Levi assumed the name Matthew (which signifies "the gift of Jehovah") at the time when he was called to follow Christ. Hence the other Evangelists only give him this name when including him in their lists of the twelve, while he uses it of himself always, even at the time when he was first called.

We can see from other indications beside his name that he was a Jew. The nature of his knowledge, and all the illustrations which he employs, declare it. It is, however, somewhat strange that such a man should have become a publican or tax-gatherer, an office held in such detestation by the Jews. But as Capernaum was not directly under the Roman power at the time of St. Matthew's call, but formed part of the government of Herod Antipas, the future Apostle may not have looked upon such service under him (a monarch, whose whole family desired to be held for Jews) in the same light in which it was viewed when rendered to the Roman conquerors.

It has often been noticed as a mark of St. Matthew's humility, that when he mentions himself in the list of the Apostles, he adds the opprobrious words "the publican," which the other Evangelists do not use ; also, though by

St. Mark and St. Luke he is always put before St. Thomas in the enumeration, he places Thomas before himself, and in a like lowly spirit makes no mention of that self-sacrifice which the other Evangelists tell us of, that "he left all" to follow Jesus. Like the other sacred writers, he keeps himself most completely out of his narrative, and after his name is recited as present in Jerusalem waiting for the day of Pentecost, we hear nothing more of him in the New Testament. Tradition tells that for fifteen years after the Ascension he preached in Judæa, and then went to more distant countries. According to one authority, he laboured in Æthiopia, others say in Parthia, or in Persia ; but neither of his work nor his end have we any sure knowledge.

Concerning the language in which St. Matthew's Gospel was originally written, there has been much debate. The Christian Fathers, beginning with Papias, who was bishop of Hierapolis early in the second century, and including Irenæus, Origen, Eusebius, and Jerome, the last named in the fourth century, all speak of a Hebrew (*i.e.* Aramaic) original, and succeeding writers adopt their statements. But the internal evidence from the Gospel itself leads to the conclusion that the Greek text which

we have is not a translation, but the work of St. Matthew himself. In many parts the words so closely agree with those of the other synop-  
tists, that to accept them as the result of a translation seems unreasonable; while in the quotations from the Old Testament (which are very numerous) we have a peculiar feature, which can hardly be due to any but the original writer. For wherever the Old Testament is quoted in the *discourses* which the Gospel contains, we find a close following of the LXX., and not such words as would have been found in a translation from an Aramaic original. But where the Old Testament *prophecies*, and their fulfilment in Christ, are spoken of, we find no longer the Septuagint version, but a rendering or adaptation of the Hebrew. Now this is exactly what we should expect. When Jesus is pointed out as the fulfiller of prophecy, it is natural that the very words of the earlier Scriptures should be in the writer's mind, but not so in the other places. For although, from the mention of St. Peter's Galilean dialect, and from the fact that the words of Psalm xxii. came most readily to our Lord's lips, at the Crucifixion, in Aramaic, we may gather that this was the usual language of Christ and the twelve; we know that the Jews were very familiar with the Septuagint,

and the adoption of Greek for the records of the New Testament is evidence that this language was well understood and widely used ; and St. Matthew, though writing for Jews, and in Palestine, might with good reason use that tongue which, while it spake to them, would also appeal to Christian Churches elsewhere.

And we have no trace of a word of the supposed Aramaic original. It seems, too, as if Jerome, in his later statements on this subject, spoke with less confidence than at first.<sup>1</sup> So although we cannot assert that St. Matthew did not write his Gospel first in Aramaic, and that this work on the dispersion of the Jewish nation entirely disappeared, yet the present Greek Gospel (which is quoted in Greek quite as early as any of the others) displays such peculiarities as make it impossible to accept it for anything but the work of St. Matthew himself.

This Gospel is evidently written by a Jew, and for Jews. This is shewn in many ways. The genealogy of Jesus is traced up only to

<sup>1</sup> In his preface to the Gospel, he says "Matthew in Judæa wrote his Gospel in the Hebrew tongue," but in another place he is content to say that the Hebrew "is called" or "is as many people say" St. Matthew's work. Cf. Alford's *Prolegomena* to St. Matthew's Gospel.

the Father of the faithful, and not as in the third Gospel to Adam. The writer is himself thoroughly familiar with Hebrew prophecy, and writes for readers who must have been equally so. In the Sermon on the Mount the address is throughout to those who knew what was commanded in the Old Testament "to them of old times." St. Matthew also, unlike the other Evangelists, uses Latin words very rarely, and with equal rareness does he explain any Jewish words or customs. He is specially earnest in recording Christ's denunciations of the scribes and Pharisees, denunciations which would not be telling in a work intended for Gentile readers, while the general cast of the contents of the Gospel, of which we shall speak presently, shews that his mind was full of Jewish ideas in all that he wrote.

It is very probable, as tradition has held from the first, that this Gospel was written before the others. It is in harmony with all Christ's ordinances for the spread of the Gospel, that each of its blessings should be first offered to the chosen people. But for fixing the precise time of its composition we have very little to guide us. Traditions vary from eight years after the Ascension to the time when St. Peter and St. Paul were at Rome together. It would



seem from the use (xxvii. 8 ; xxviii. 15) of the phrase "unto this day," that some time must have elapsed between the events of the Crucifixion and the writing of St. Matthew's narrative. But if any reliance may be placed on the statement that this Evangelist left Palestine fifteen years after the Ascension, this allows interval enough for such a phrase to become applicable, while no fitter parting gift could have been left by St. Matthew to his countrymen than a Gospel which, like this, is composed so thoroughly in the spirit of the writings of the older covenant. It seems therefore not unreasonable to suppose that it was written about A.D. 50, or a little later.

The contents of St. Matthew's Gospel may be divided into two great sections, which bear a relation to the two aspects in which the Messiah is set forth in Old Testament prophecy. He was to be "a King reigning in righteousness," but also "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." The first section, which extends from the beginning to chapter xvi. 20, is occupied with setting forth Jesus of Nazareth as Immanuel, God with us, made manifest by His works of power and words of mercy, as "He of whom Moses in the Law and the prophets did write." The rest of the Gospel



treats mostly of the sufferings of Jesus, from the first brief announcement of them, until the work was finished on Calvary. The Christian fathers have from the earliest times recognized that St. Matthew sets forth Jesus as a king, but have not always observed that it is King Messiah.

The first section contains two parts; one which treats of those events which preceded Christ's own ministerial acts (chap. i.-iv. 11), and the other containing such a selection of His words and works as shewed, and led some to confess, that He was the Son of God (iv. 12-xvi. 20).

(i.) In the first part the keynote is sounded in the mention of King David at the outset of the genealogy, and the whole line of the ancestry bespeaks the King. The genealogy is followed by the announcement of the Divine conception of Jesus, the giving of His name, and the description of His office. The visit of the wise men and the alarm of Herod are each in their kind, intimations of the greatness of Him, who was "born King of the Jews." That He came in fulfilment of prophecy is attested by the Baptist, and His Divine nature by the voice from heaven; while His victory over Satan in the temptation bears witness that what

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had been spoken of Him was true, even the enemy addressing Him as "the Son of God."

(ii.) The second part is marked off by its subjects into three divisions—

*a.* iv. 12-x. 42. At the opening of the ministerial life of Jesus, St. Matthew tells of the choice of the first disciples, and gives a general notice of the character of Christ's preaching and miracles. Then in the Sermon on the Mount (v., vi., vii.), and in the group of miracles described in the two following chapters (viii., ix.), we have grand examples both of the teaching and the mighty works, and these are followed (x.) by the choosing of the twelve, and an account of the powers and solemn charge which Christ gave to these His first ambassadors.

*β.* With the mission of John's disciples begins that part of the narrative (xi., xii., xiii.), in which Jesus more than once, by express words, proclaims Himself as "the Son of God." The answer to the Baptist's inquiry shewed that in Him the predictions of the Old Testament were fulfilled, and that they were blessed who, discerning this, were not offended in Him. But to say, as He now did, that God was His Father, was the great offence; and the history in this part closes with the indignant words of

those who would see in Him only "the son of the carpenter."

γ. As a contrast, we have in the next division (xiv.-xvi. 20) two confessions that He was "the Son of God." The first was made by those who, after witnessing the feeding of the five thousand, and the calming of the storm on the sea of Tiberias, were constrained to own in Him the Creator and Lord of the universe. The second was by St. Peter, as the spokesman of the twelve. They had been learning from the lips of Jesus that it was in vain to put the doctrines of men in place of the commandments of God, and to call such conduct by the name of worship; that from the heart of man only cometh that which really defileth; while by His deeds of mercy toward the Canaanitish mother, and to the four thousand who followed Him on the other side of Gennesaret, they had learnt that others beside the children of the older covenant would be partakers of the new kingdom; they had heard Christ rebuke the Pharisees and Sadducees, and had been warned by Him against the doctrines of such teachers—men who were wilfully blinded, and could not discern the signs of the times; and now when they were asked, "Whom say ye that I am?" there came forth evidence that the first

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part of their lesson had been learnt in the words, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

After this begins that other lesson, that Christ must suffer; a lesson even harder to grasp than the former. St. Matthew makes Christ repeat it four times.

First (xvi. 21-28), we read, "From this time forth began Jesus to shew to His disciples how that . . . He must suffer." We see Peter's resentment of such a thought, and how Christ chides him with the lesson that not only He, but all who follow Him, must bear the cross.

Then (xvii.-xx. 16), immediately after the glory of the Transfiguration, and the manifestation of Divine power in the cure of the lunatic child, the prediction of the passion is repeated, and is followed by the willing payment of tribute, and many other lessons of humility, forgiveness of injuries, and sacrifice of self, and the warning that in the kingdom, when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of His glory, many that are first shall be last, and the last first.

The third prediction is uttered (xx. 17-19) just as they are about to go up to Jerusalem. This is followed (xx. 20-xxv. 46) by the request of the mother of the sons of Zebedee,

which evokes further teaching of lowliness. The blind men on the way hail Jesus as the Son of David, and he rides in triumph into Jerusalem. He purifies the temple, and triumphs also in His conferences with chief priests and elders, Pharisees, Sadducees, and lawyers, and pronounces solemn woes on the hypocrisy of those who sat in the seat of Moses, but did their works only to be seen of men. Then to His disciples He speaks much of the destruction of Jerusalem, of the end of the world, and the nature of the judgment at the last day.

For the last time, two days before the passover-tide, Jesus again foretells His coming death (xxvi.—xxviii.), and the Evangelist follows this with the details of the betrayal, the passover feast, the agony, the arrest, trial and death, the rending of the veil of the temple, and those other signs, which forced even the centurion to say, "Truly this was the Son of God." The story of the Resurrection is briefly narrated, after which the commission to the Apostles proclaims the Divinity of the speaker : "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth ;" and that He is still "Immanuel" : "Lo, *I am with you* alway, even unto the end of the world."

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It remains to mention those matters in St. Matthew's Gospel which are peculiar to his narrative. These are the coming of the wise men from the East, the massacre of the children at Bethlehem, the flight of the Holy Family into Egypt and their return to Nazareth ; then the coming of the Pharisees and Sadducees to be baptized of John, Peter's request that he might come to Jesus on the water, the payment of tribute by Christ, the thirty pieces of silver paid to Judas, as also that traitor's remorse and death, the dream of Pilate's wife, the rising from the grave of the saints in Jerusalem, the watch set at Christ's sepulchre, the bribing of the soldiers, and the earthquake before the Resurrection.

It is a feature of St. Matthew's Gospel, that he preserves several discourses not recorded by the other evangelists. Such are the Sermon on the Mount, the discourse on humility in ch. xviii., the connected denunciations of the scribes and Pharisees in ch. xxiii., the description of the last judgment (xxv.), and the apostolic commission (xxviii.). Smaller speeches are the invitation to the heavy laden (xi.), the warning against idle words (xii.), the blessing pronounced on St. Peter after his confession (xvi.), as well as those solemn words about the rejection of the Jews (xxi. 43).

Two miracles are peculiar to St. Matthew: the cure of the two blind men (ix.), and the finding of the piece of money in the fish's mouth (xvii.), and ten parables, *viz.* of the tares, the hid treasure, the pearl of great price, the draw-net, the unmerciful servant, the labourers in the vineyard, the two sons, the marriage of the king's son, the wise and foolish virgins, and its fellow-parable of the talents.

*(b) The Gospel according to St. Mark.*

THE writer of the second Gospel was not an Apostle, yet we know far more of his history from the New Testament, than we do of the Apostle St. Matthew. He has been generally held to be that Mark, likewise named John (Acts xii. 12), who was the companion of Paul and Barnabas in their first missionary journey, and who parted from them before its close, and for some reason returned to Jerusalem.<sup>1</sup> He was a cousin (Col. iv. 10) of Barnabas, which accounts for the desire of that Apostle that he should be joined with St. Paul and himself

<sup>1</sup> The return has been often ascribed to a desire to take part with St. Peter in the preaching in Palestine. This agrees with the after history very well, and makes it easy to understand that St. Paul came in the end to think so highly of Mark.



on their second journey. Because St. Paul declined to take him, Barnabas, with Mark as his own companion, parted from his fellow-Apostle, and went to labour in a different direction. The mother of John Mark was Mary, an inhabitant of Jerusalem. She must have been one of the wealthier members of the Christian body there, since she had a house large enough for a great number of the congregation to assemble in; and it was there that the brethren were gathered together in prayer at the time of Peter's imprisonment by Herod. That Apostle must have made this house his frequent resort, for it was thither he first turned after his miraculous deliverance, and his voice was familiar to the maid as she heard it through the closed door. His attachment to the family is evidenced by the expression, "Marcus, my son," which he uses (1 Pet. v. 13), as is thought, of this Evangelist, and which may signify that Mark had been won to Christ by St. Peter's ministry.

We know that St. Paul's opinion of Mark did not continue to be unfavourable, for in later days, during the Apostle's first imprisonment (Philem. 24), he speaks of him as a "fellow-labourer"; and later still, in his second imprisonment, testifies (2 Tim. iv. 11) "he is



profitable to me for the ministry." St. Mark was spoken of in very early times<sup>1</sup> as the "interpreter of St. Peter." By some this has been thought to mean that the Evangelist rendered into Greek the Aramaic discourses of the Apostle. But it is far more likely that the expression implies the putting into the form of a Gospel narrative the substance of St. Peter's oral teaching concerning Christ's life. And the context of the passage where this expression is found favours the latter sense; for it is added, "he wrote down exactly whatever things he remembered."

It is further reported that it was at the request of those Christians in Rome, who had heard St. Peter, that St. Mark made a record of the Apostle's teachings. And there are some features in the Gospel which would suit with this tradition. It contains comparatively little reference to Old Testament prophecy, and all such matters as would specially interest a Jew are omitted. On the other hand explanations are given, which a Jew would not require;

<sup>1</sup> By Papias, bishop of Hierapolis, "a hearer of John and a companion of Polycarp," whose words are preserved by Eusebius, *H.E.*, iii. 39. The genuineness of St. Mark's Gospel is attested by numerous quotations in writers as early as Justin Martyr and Irenæus.

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while the condemnation of the scribes and Pharisees, so prominent in St. Matthew's narrative, but fully intelligible only to Jewish readers, appears in St. Mark's Gospel only very incidentally. Then he speaks more distinctly of the admission of the heathen into the kingdom of heaven, and he alone among the Evangelists makes our Lord's quotation from Isaiah at the purging of the temple (xi. 17), include those words which pronounce that house to be a house of prayer "for all nations." These and other like peculiarities mark this Gospel as specially written for Gentile readers, while the somewhat large admixture of Latin words in its language gives some support to the tradition which assigns Rome as the place of its writing, and the Roman Christians as its first recipients.

Beyond what we learn from Scripture, tradition records of St. Mark that he was sent by St. Peter into Egypt, where he founded the Church of Alexandria, and where he was made bishop, and ended his life by martyrdom. But for most of these statements the evidence is late and doubtful.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It has been thought by some that the words in the Gospel (xiv. 51, 52), which describe how, on the night of Christ's betrayal, "a certain young man, having a linen cloth cast about his naked body, followed Jesus, and the

It is certainly not unfitting that the Church at Rome, destined to play so conspicuous a part in the history of Western Christianity, should be debtor to both the great Apostles,—to St. Paul for his Epistle, and to St. Peter, through his son in the faith, for a narrative of the life of Christ.

And that St. Mark's Gospel was drawn from St. Peter's preaching seems not improbable when we look at the internal evidence. In both the Epistles ascribed to that Apostle we meet with a multitude of figurative expressions and much graphic diction. He constantly makes pictures by his words. In those parts of the Acts of the Apostles, also, which may be looked upon as derived from him, we notice the same peculiarity. This will be manifest to any one who compares the narrative of the cure of the cripple at the temple gate (Acts iii.) with the account of a similar miracle wrought by St. Paul at Lystra (Acts xiv.) ; of which latter cure the story is either in St. Luke's own words, or taken from St. Paul's description. In it all the young men laid hold on him, and he left the linen cloth, and fled from them naked," is so minute in its details that it must be an account of what happened to Mark himself, and that he has suppressed his name while narrating what only he to whom it occurred could have known about so exactly.

graphic features which are found in the earlier chapter are wanting. We are told nothing of the attentive gaze of the Apostle, of his reading the lame man's thoughts in his face, of the actions accompanying the cure, nor anything to compare with the exultant joy of the healed man, who laid hold on the clothes of Peter and John, and went with them into the temple, "walking, and leaping, and praising God."

With language of this pictorial character St. Mark's Gospel abounds. He introduces into almost every story graphic touches which are found in neither of the other synoptists. Thus, in the account of the cure of the lunatic child after the Transfiguration, St. Mark alone presents the boy as wallowing on the ground and foaming when he is brought to Jesus. He alone makes the history dramatic by introducing at some length the conversation of Jesus with the child's father. He alone tells of the father's tears and passionate cry, "Lord, I believe ; help Thou mine unbelief ;" and how, when the spirit had gone forth, the child was sore rent, and lay as dead, insomuch that some said, "He is dead ;" but Jesus took him by the hand, and "lifted him up," and he arose.

It may be noticed in passing how this characteristic, which makes the second Gospel to differ

so markedly from the others, renders it impossible for us to suppose that the narratives were in any way copied from one another. And St. Mark's whole story is full of these word-pictures. With him the heavens at Christ's baptism are "rent" asunder; at His temptation Jesus is "with the wild beasts," and had been previously "driven" of the Spirit into the wilderness. James and John, when called by Christ, are in the ship "with the hired servants" of their father. At the house where Jesus abode when He healed many that were sick, "all the city" is pictured as "gathered together at the door." The man sick of the palsy, when brought to Jesus, is "borne of four." For these marks of the Evangelist's style we have gone very little beyond his first chapter, and a similar character pervades all the language, except that of the last twelve verses, of which we shall speak hereafter.

In the work of such a writer we should expect to find both the human and divine aspects of Christ's life strongly marked, and in this we are not disappointed. At the outset, in the words which form what we may call the title of his Gospel, he assumes that his readers know the supernatural birth and divine character of Him of whom he has to write, but yet he

constantly sets it forth in his graphic speech. Thus he tells us much of the amazement (i. 27 ; ii. 12), and the fear (iv. 41 ; vi. 50), and the marvelling (v. 20), and the wonder (vi. 51), and the astonishment (vii. 37), which the God-like words and works of Jesus excited in those about Him ; how multitudes pressed around Him, how the sick were brought to Him in crowds, or laid where He would pass by, and how all that He touched were made perfectly whole. Just as St. Peter says elsewhere (Acts x. 38), " He went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil ; for God was with Him." But with all this we have at the same time the most striking tokens of His humanity. We are told how He hungered, and needed rest and sleep like other men, how He was moved by love and grief, pity and wonder, anger and even violent indignation.

In thinking of St. Peter as the source whence St. Mark drew the materials for his Gospel, it is important to notice how the *order* in which events are ranged by this Evangelist accords with the arrangement in St. Matthew. St. Mark does not record *all* the deeds of Jesus which are mentioned in the first Gospel, and he gives us very little of our Lord's discourses anywhere ; but the sequence of those actions which he

does narrate corresponds in a marked manner. This becomes very evident if a list of the events recorded by each Evangelist be placed side by side, and in such comparison it will be seen that when the sequence in the two records varies, it is not a single incident that is differently placed, but a group of incidents, which, in their changed position, preserve their proper consecution. Thus the Sabbath day's journey through the cornfields, followed by the cure of the man with the withered hand, and the desire of the Pharisees to destroy Jesus, in consequence of which He withdrew Himself, and in His retirement wrought many miracles (all narrated in Mark ii. and iii.), are found similarly conjoined in Matthew xii. As neither Evangelist regarded chronological order in his work, such coincidence of arrangement can only come about because the two writers gave the story as it was impressed on the memory of eye-witnesses; St. Matthew, his own recollections; St. Mark, it may well be, those of St. Peter.

Moreover the mention of St. Peter, in connection with some events in our Lord's history, where he is not mentioned by the other Evangelists, seems to point to his share in the composition of the second Gospel, while the omission in St. Mark's narrative of some things,



which would seem to give Peter importance above his fellows, has been ascribed to a modesty which checked the recital of such incidents. It is by St. Mark alone that we are told how Peter followed our Lord in the morning after His miracles in Capernaum ; that Peter noticed and spake of the speedy withering of the fig-tree, and was the one to ask Jesus, as He sat on the Mount of Olives, about the coming destruction of Jerusalem ; and that Peter was specially singled out by the angel as the Apostle to whom the announcement of the Resurrection should be made. On the other hand, this Gospel says nothing of Peter's share in the discussion concerning "what defileth a man," nor of his walking on the sea, nor of his being sent to catch a fish, in the mouth of which he should find money to pay the Temple tribute, nor how Christ named him<sup>1</sup> "the Rock" on which His

<sup>1</sup> It is impossible to give in English the force of the Lord's words here by translation only. Of course, the Church was not built on the individual Peter, but on that acknowledgment of Christ as the Son of God which Peter had just made. The Greek has two words for *rock*—one masculine, *petros*, which is the name of the Apostle ; one feminine, *petra*, which is used in the second clause of the verse. Our Lord's meaning might be given thus : "Thy name *Petros* bespeaks thee a man of rock, and this outspoken confession of thine shall be the firm rock (*petra*) on which My Church shall stand."



Church should be built (Matt. xvi. 18), nor how he was one of those two sent by Jesus to make ready the Passover, nor that for him Christ made special prayer that his faith might not utterly fail. All these indications taken together give much weight to the tradition that in the second Gospel we read the Gospel according to St. Peter.

After the introductory verses (chap. i. 1-13), which speak very briefly<sup>1</sup> of the Divine character of Jesus, and His fulfilment of Old Testament prophecies; then of John's baptism and preaching, and how Christ was baptized of him, and after that driven into the wilderness to be tempted, the contents of St. Mark's Gospel may conveniently be divided into three somewhat unequal portions, according to the localities in which the events took place. First we have (chap. i. 14-ix. 56) the life in Galilee, and the short journeys made from thence into the country round about. At the beginning of this period, while the disciples are called unto Him, and until after the choice of the twelve, the

<sup>1</sup> The first verse of the Gospel is very condensed, yet it shews that the Evangelist knew (and took for granted the like knowledge in his readers) of the "glad tidings" (Luke ii. 10), of the divinely-given name, Jesus (Matt. i. 21), that Jesus was the Christ, the Messiah (John i. 41), and the Divine Son (John i. 49).

narrative is confined to the teaching and miracles of Jesus in Capernaum and the country at the west side of the sea of Galilee. Apparently for rest (iv. 35) He makes a voyage over the lake, but the Gadarenes soon entreat Him to depart out of their coasts (v. 17); and returning, He continues His labour among His own people, and sends out the twelve on a like mission, bestowing on them some of His own mighty powers. St. Mark mentions no other departure till after the death of John the Baptist, when Jesus, with the twelve, whose mission was now ended, again crossed the lake (vi. 32), whence, after the feeding of the five thousand, He bids His disciples leave Him and go to Bethsaida (vi. 43); but Himself follows them, walking on the sea, and so they all are in the land of Gennesaret (vi. 53). Hence they make a longer journey into the districts bordering on Tyre and Sidon (vii. 24), and there the Saviour's works make it known that others beside "the lost sheep of the house of Israel" are to be partakers of Christ's kingdom. Crossing into the district of Peræa, by a land route to the north of the sea of Galilee, they gain the eastern side of the lake by passing through Decapolis (vii. 31), and in this part of the country also it is likely that those for whom His miracles were wrought were for

the most part not Jews. Coming once more to the west side of the lake, they visit Dalmanutha (viii. 10), which place, we gather from St. Matthew's account (xv. 39), was in the neighbourhood of Magdala. The questioning cavils of the Pharisees, however, soon send Him to the eastern shore again (viii. 11-13); and when they next return, the more retired Bethsaida (viii. 22) is their destination, rather than Capernaum; and from thence another northern tour is made into the towns about Cesaræa-Philippi (viii. 27), in which once more He sheds His light over "Galilee of the Gentiles." Turning south, they pass through Galilee (ix. 30), and come back to His own city of Capernaum (ix. 33). After this the Lord's time is spent in solemn converse with the twelve, on such duties as humility, charity towards those who differ, and the shunning of all that may prove a stumbling-block either to themselves or others. For the end was drawing near, and the twelve were to be the founders of His kingdom, the light of the world, the salt of the earth; and so He leaves them as His closing words in Galilee, "Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another."

In this section of the Gospel which deals with the largest period of Christ's ministerial life, St.

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Mark has in his narrative placed special emphasis on one feature of the Lord's character—His constant withdrawal from the throng, and even from the company of the twelve, that He might be alone. He shunned all publicity for Himself or His work ; and beside the numerous exhortations to those whom He healed, that they should tell no man, the Evangelist has recorded in these nine chapters eight occasions on which Jesus sought solitude for rest, prayer, and meditation.

The second division of the Gospel is contained in chapter x., and treats of what befell in the way from Galilee through Peræa, and afterwards across the Jordan as far as Jericho, in the last journey to the Holy City. The time spent in this journey can only have been two or three days.

The third portion (xi. 1–xvi. 20) relates the closing scenes of the Lord's life in the time between His arrival near Jerusalem and His death and resurrection, the ten most eventful days in the world's history ; and the brief close of the Gospel carries the history forward to the Ascension, noticing three occasions on which Christ shewed Himself to His followers after His resurrection.

Of the genuineness and authenticity of the

second Gospel there has never been any serious question. We have testimony to its existence from the days of Papias and Justin Martyr. The former of these was a friend of Polycarp, the disciple of St. John ; the latter was born in Palestine before the close of the first century.

But there is one passage (xvi. 9-20) about which there has been much difference of opinion, and the discussion of which has been newly revived by the way in which it has been dealt with in the lately published Revised Version. A break is made by the revisers after xvi. 8, and a note is added, that "the two oldest Greek manuscripts, and some other authorities omit from verse 9 to the end. Some other authorities have a different ending to the Gospel." This note is all true. What we would fain know is, How came it to be so? The two MSS. which are entirely without these final verses are the *Codex Sinaiticus* (Σ) and the *Codex Vaticanus* (B). In the latter of these, however, the scribe has left a space between the end of verse 8 and the commencement of the Gospel of St. Luke, as though he knew of a closing section of the second Gospel, which however was not present in the MS. from which he was copying.

In the original, verse 8 ends with a feeble unemphatic word (γάρ), which cannot stand alone

and which could never have been allowed to end either a book or a sentence.<sup>1</sup> It seems clear from this that the Gospel did not end originally there, and also that there is some unnatural break between verses 8 and 9. The last statement is evident also from the contents of verse 9; for that verse goes back to mention "the first day of the week" in such a way as would be needless if it were a part of the same narrative with verse 2. Then it speaks of Mary Magdalene, and adds "out of whom He had cast seven devils," an addition which would have been quite in place if she were now noticed for the first time, but is inconsistent with the mention made of her in verse 1. Next, verse 9 relates to a different subject from verse 8, and the rupture is very patent if we leave out the italic word supplied in the Authorized Version. Then we read, "for *they* were afraid. Now when *He* was risen early," etc.

It was a sense, no doubt, of the last-mentioned

<sup>1</sup> There are two passages which have been brought forward to contradict this statement, John xiii. 13, "Ye say well, for so I am" (εἰμὶ γάρ). But a glance suffices to shew that this is a mere parenthetical exclamation, and neither the closing word of a book or sentence. The other is Genesis xlv. 3, in the LXX. But on turning either to the Hebrew or the English we see that the LXX. has omitted the words for "at his presence." The Greek of the LXX. is probably defective here, and cannot be quoted with authority for any such usage.

awkwardness which led to the formation of the shorter ending alluded to in the revisers' note. That joins on thus, "for they were afraid [and they announced all that had been told them to Peter and his companions ; and after this Jesus Himself sent out by them, from the east even unto the west, the sacred and uncorrupted message of eternal salvation]." These words run on grammatically with the close of verse 8 ; but though of ancient date, and found in one of the uncial MSS., they cannot be accepted as the original conclusion of the Gospel. The last words have a ring in them which does not sound like Gospel history. And when we add to this that the uncial MS. in which they are found gives also the longer ending as it is given in our Authorized Version, with a note that both forms of ending have gained acceptance in different places, we see at once the doubtful character of these additions. Similar evidence is to be found in one of the cursive MSS., which marks "The end" after verse 8, and again "The end" after verse 20.<sup>1</sup> Some of the

<sup>1</sup> And this word "The end" cannot be explained as merely marking the close of an ecclesiastical lection, for in some ancient Armenian MSS. we find the colophon "Gospel according to Mark" at the end of both verses 8 and 20, which significantly explains what "The end" in the Greek MS. meant.



old versions, too, stop at the end of verse 8, and we have patristic testimony as early as Eusebius (who was alive before the oldest MS. of the Greek text which we possess was written), that in his day some persons did not accept the verses 9-20 as a part of the original Gospel. The language, moreover, of these verses lacks all that graphic character of which so much has been already said on this Gospel, while there is found in them a large number of words (considering the smallness of the passage) which St. Mark uses nowhere else.

There are many other points to be alleged both for and against the genuineness of this section,<sup>1</sup> but the most weighty have been named; and in the face of such evidence, combined with the clearly broken sentence which closes verse 8, it seems most reasonable to conclude that the words of St. Mark himself do not go beyond that verse. Either his manuscript, for

<sup>1</sup> The most elaborate work on the subject is that of Dean Burgon, on which he has bestowed abundant pains, and some very hard words on other workers in the same field. At the close of the volume the Dean writes, "not a particle of doubt, not an atom of suspicion attaches to the last twelve verses of the Gospel according to St. Mark." In spite of this language, the recent revision of the New Testament shews that from the minds of many excellent scholars doubt is not removed.



some unknown reason, ceased with this broken sentence, or, what seems more likely, the last leaf of the early exemplar was lost, and the preceding page closed with the fragment of verse 8. It is clear that both the longer and shorter endings are of a very early date, and that both were appended by those who revered greatly the existing text. The framer of the shorter conclusion fashioned his sentence so as to join on without altering anything of what was written. The longer form was added by those who kept, in spite of its incompleteness, the exact words of the first text, and only appended a brief summary of post-resurrection history to give completeness to the Gospel record. This summary was undoubtedly drawn from some approved source, and may have been taken from one of those many narratives to which St. Luke alludes in the opening of his Gospel.

(c) *The Gospel according to St. Luke.*

St. Luke's Gospel differs from the two which precede it in stating at the outset the reason for its composition. Many narratives had been put forth, the writer says, of those things on which the Christian faith was based, and as he had good opportunities for knowing the truth there-

on, he undertakes his work for the information of his friend Theophilus. He would seem to intimate that what had already appeared was wanting in order and accuracy ; for he sets forth these two qualities as the special characteristics of what he himself has compiled. He was not himself an eye-witness of Christ's acts, but he had his information from those who were so, and from some who were ministers of the Word.

As the writer makes no exceptions in his hint at the need for a more exact history, it is most probable that he was not acquainted with the Gospels of St. Matthew and St. Mark,—a conclusion at which we might also arrive from a comparison of the contents of his Gospel with theirs. Yet the statement in the preface would lead us to the impression that a considerable time had elapsed since the death of Christ before St. Luke began his Gospel. The other histories of which he speaks had become numerous, and to write such histories while the Apostles were actively preaching, and several of them living in the Holy Land, would not be the first pressing work of Christian authorship. If therefore St. Luke wrote, as is most probable, at a later date than his fellow-synoptists, it seems likely that he wrote neither in Palestine nor at Rome.

We cannot, however, fix with any certainty the date of St. Luke's Gospel. We conclude, taking for granted what internal evidence indicates, and what tradition has handed down to us, that the Gospel was written before the Acts of the Apostles. It is "the former (*or rather* first) treatise" to which the writer of the Acts alludes in his opening words. As the apostolic history closes with the first imprisonment of St. Paul at Rome, which came to an end about A.D. 63, we may take that as a date before which St. Luke's Gospel had certainly been written. We learn from Acts (xxvii.) that the author of that book went with St. Paul in his voyage to Rome; and Luke stayed with St. Paul during his imprisonment (Col. iv. 14). The troublous events of this time would not be favourable to authorship, and we may on that ground put back the date of the composition probably to A.D. 60, or even earlier. Nearer than this we cannot come with any certainty. There is a period in St. Luke's life during which he might have compiled his Gospel, and when such a work would have been most suitable. He appears to have been left behind at Philippi in St. Paul's first visit there (cf. Acts xvi. 10 with 40), and to have remained there while the Apostle went first to Athens and Corinth, then into Syria, after that

to Ephesus, then through Macedonia into Greece, and back again to Philippi (see Acts xvii. 1, xx. 5). At this return visit St. Luke went away with him. For all these journeys and labours we cannot reckon less than five or six years, as we read during the time of two long residences of St. Paul at Corinth and in Ephesus. If throughout this period St. Luke was settled at Philippi, as the centre of missionary life in Macedonia, he would have abundant opportunity for composing his Gospel, and the work would be one which might suggest itself to him from the needs of the Churches in which he was labouring. If he prepared the work at the beginning of his stay there, we get back to A.D. 54, as about the date at which it may have been written, and this date will give time enough for those numerous narratives to have been set forth to which he makes allusion in his preface.

The name of Luke is found only three times in the New Testament (Col. iv. 14 ; Philem. 24 ; 2 Tim. iv. 11). From these notices we learn that he was a physician, the friend and companion of St. Paul at Rome, both in his first and second imprisonment. Further, from the context of the first of the passages here referred to, we gather that St. Luke was of Gentile origin, for he is classed among those of the uncir-

cumcision. The earliest Christian writers who preserve any traditions about him tell us that he was born at Antioch, but of this they give no satisfactory evidence. In the Acts of the Apostles (xvi. 10) we gather from the language that the author first joined St. Paul at Troas, and passed over with him and Silas to Philippi. Yet the unmarked way in which the change of pronoun (from *they* to *we*), is introduced, assures us that the historian had been before known to the Apostle, and that it was quite natural that he should be of his company. St. Luke, as has been observed, did not continue with St. Paul farther than Philippi, but joined him again some years later, and continued with him in Syria during his imprisonment at Cæsarea, and also in his perilous voyage after his appeal to Cæsar. This is the utmost we learn from the New Testament, whether by statement or inference.

Theophilus, for whose use both the Gospel and the Acts were written, seems, from the official title<sup>1</sup> given to him, "most excellent," to have been some Gentile convert to Christianity, who, either at the imperial court or in some

<sup>1</sup> The title is the same as that given to Felix (Acts xxiv. 3) and to Festus (Acts xxvi. 25), though in those places the A. V. renders it "most noble."

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colony, had attained a position of dignity. His name bespeaks his Greek nationality, and he may have been a converted Greek freedman, as no doubt some of those were whom St. Paul (Phil. iv. 22) speaks of as "Cæsar's household."

The writer of the third Gospel, then, was not a Jew, not a personal follower of Jesus, not an eye-witness of anything he describes, nor perhaps greatly familiar with the scenes amid which the life of Jesus was spent: all which points must be taken into account in judging of the character and aim of his Gospel; for it cannot but interest us to speculate from what sources he drew his materials. That he used them faithfully we can have little doubt, for evidence of this meets us at the very opening of the history. The preface to the Gospel (chap. i. 1-4) is written in such language as to shew us that the Evangelist, had he been so minded, could have produced a work marked by much higher literary skill than the records of the other synoptists. But, the preface ended, he leaves his almost classical style, and adopts the diction of his informants, and in some matters becomes as thoroughly Hebraic in expression as the veriest Jew could have been. A Greek-speaking Gentile could give no greater proof of faithful dealing with what he found recorded.

When compared with the two preceding Gospels, St. Luke's narrative divides itself into four well-marked sections. After the brief prefatory words just spoken of, we have some account (i. 5—ii. 52) of the pre-ministerial life of our Lord; but therein, except in the broad facts of Christ's birth and parentage, there is nothing parallel to that part of St. Matthew's Gospel which relates to the same period.

Next (from iii. 1 to ix. 50) there follows a history of the Galilæan life of Jesus, in which the writer narrates much that is found in the other synoptists, but with marked variations of expression throughout, which indicate that it was not from them that the matter was drawn, a specially noteworthy feature being the genealogy of our Lord, in which His descent is not traced, as in St. Matthew, up to Abraham only, but carried back to Adam, the father of the whole human race.

After this, having reached the time of our Lord's life at which He must make His final journey to Jerusalem, our Evangelist records at far greater length than the other two the acts and words of Jesus just before and during the ascent to the holy city. This section extends from ix. 51 to xviii. 14, and, though it has some points common to St. Matthew and St. Mark, is



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yet in the main peculiar to this Gospel, and in it is recorded the mission of the seventy, of which the other Evangelists make no mention.

When the neighbourhood of Jerusalem has been reached, St. Luke (xviii. 15-xxiv. 53) relates the events which preceded and followed the passion of our Lord in some points more fully than we have them elsewhere, but yet for the most part agreeing in matter and arrangement with what is told us by St. Matthew and St. Mark, only that the history after the Resurrection has not its parallel in the other narratives. And in connexion with this section we may observe, what bears out St. Luke's statement about the collection of his materials, that in the commencement of the Acts we have a fuller and somewhat varying description of the Ascension, the recital of which can hardly be accounted for, except by assuming that after the Gospel was completed and sent to Theophilus, more information came to the knowledge of the Evangelist, which he faithfully set down, feeling that it was no contradiction, but an expansion of what had been written in "the former treatise."

Each of these sections of St. Luke's narrative deserves some further notice. About the first of them, which is so entirely different from the other Gospels, much discussion has been raised.



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Its contents are an account of the parentage and birth of John the Baptist, of the heavenly announcement to the Virgin Mary, and a statement of her kinship to Elisabeth, the mother of the Baptist. Interwoven with this history are the two hymns of praise, so Jewish<sup>1</sup> in form and language, employed, the one by the Virgin on her visit to Elisabeth, the other by Zacharias when his speech was restored to him. This is followed by an account which explains to us why the parents, whose home was Nazareth, were away in Bethlehem when the promised child was born. Then we read of the vision of the shepherds, the circumcision and the purification, with which is connected the beautiful narrative of Simeon, with his song of praise on beholding the infant Saviour, and the prophetic utterances of him and of Anna concerning the future of the wondrous child. A few words concerning the life at Nazareth, and the account of Jesus, at twelve years old, questioning with the Jewish doctors in the Temple, concludes this picture of Christ's early years which St. Luke has alone preserved for us.

<sup>1</sup> The comparison of the Magnificat (Luke i. 46-55) with the Song of Hannah (1 Sam. ii. 1-10) has often been made, and all the hymns are of the same Old Testament character.

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As we read these two chapters, it is almost impossible to avoid the notice that every detail contained in them could have been known to one person and hardly to any other. That person is the Virgin herself, and from her, or some one who had lived in close communion with her, we must decide that the narrative was in the first instance derived. Twice over, too, the historian himself here points, in a way that is not done elsewhere in the Gospel history, to the mother of Jesus as the storehouse whence his record was drawn. He tells us (ii. 19), after the visit of the shepherds, how "Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart," and again (ii. 51) how, after the tarrying of Jesus in the temple, "His mother kept all these sayings in her heart." There is also an indication in the Acts (i. 14) that St. Luke was well informed of the history of our Lord's mother and His brethren too; for he specially includes them in the list of those who, with the twelve, waited at Jerusalem in prayerful expectation for the coming of the Holy Ghost. It seems natural therefore to conclude that either from the Virgin or from those with whom she lived, it may be from St. John himself (John xix. 27), St. Luke obtained this portion of his narrative; and drawing from such a source, we

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can well see why he says that he has "perfect understanding of all things *from the very first.*"

The second section, which harmonizes in most of the events, though, as we might expect, not entirely in arrangement, with the other synoptic narratives, must have been drawn from the information, oral or written, of those who had been with our Lord during His ministry in Galilee. All the chief circumstances of that ministry are recorded here ; but there are some important additions peculiar to St. Luke. Such are the answers which the Baptist gave to those who came unto him to be baptized ; the account of the miraculous draught of fishes at the time of St. Peter's call to follow Jesus ; the touching narrative of the raising of the widow's son at Nain ; the parable of the two debtors, spoken in the house of Simon the Pharisee ; and Christ's conversation with Moses and Elias at the Transfiguration. This list of passages found in St. Luke alone contains nothing, except in the last named on the list, which would point to any special person or persons as the source of the narrative whence Luke derived his information. At the Transfiguration, however, Peter, James and John alone were present, and as Peter is traditionally held to be St.

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Mark's authority, it may be that one of the other two favoured disciples furnished the accounts which St. Luke has preserved to us. His assertion, that it was not only from eye-witnesses, but from those who were *ministers of the word*, that he was instructed, gives warrant for such a supposition.

To the third section of St. Luke's narrative, which is so peculiarly his own, the same remark will apply. It could only have been supplied primarily by one of those most immediately in attendance on Jesus in that last journey from the north to Jerusalem. What treasures it has preserved for us will be seen from a simple enumeration of its chief portions. Without it we should not have the parables of the importunate friend, the rich fool, the barren fig-tree, the lost piece of silver, nor the still more touching lessons contained in the stories of the good Samaritan, the prodigal son, the unjust steward, the rich man and Lazarus, and the Pharisee and publican. Here alone, too, are recorded the healing of the woman with the spirit of infirmity (xiii.), of the man who had the dropsy (xiv), and of the ten lepers (xvii.). The witness who garnered all these stores, to be used by St. Luke in time to come, can have been none but a very zealous attendant on Jesus, can hardly

have been other than a member of the chosen twelve.

In the last division of his narrative, St. Luke differs less than elsewhere from his fellow-evangelists, but even here he has some striking details of which there is no other mention in the New Testament. Such are the weeping of Jesus over Jerusalem, His bloody sweat in the garden of Gethsemane, the healing of the ear of Malchus, the sending of Jesus from Pilate to Herod, the solemn address to the daughters of Jerusalem, the prayer on the cross, "Father, forgive them," the account of the penitent robber, the appearance of the risen Lord to the two disciples going to Emmaus, and the particulars of the Ascension. With regard to the last mentioned of these matters peculiar to St. Luke, an objection has been raised, that the account in the Gospel contradicts what is said in the Acts; for in the latter we learn that Christ remained with His disciples forty days after the Resurrection, while the Gospel (the objectors say) makes the Ascension to take place on the same day as the Resurrection. When, however, we examine the closing section of the Gospel, we find that the two disciples were at Emmaus towards evening of the day of the Resurrection; they returned to Jerusalem

that night, and told what they had seen. But after this has been stated, the chapter is broken up at ver. 36 (which a comparison with John xx. 26-28 shows to be an account of what took place eight days after the Resurrection), and at verses 44 and 50, into three distinct sections, with no marks of time to unite them; and in the midst of the whole we are told that Christ opened the minds of His disciples, that they might understand the Scriptures. All this is not the work of one day; besides which, the reasoning of the objectors would make the Ascension to take place at night, after the disciples had come back from Emmaus. Thus there is no contradiction, but such a set of circumstances as we should expect where the writer was drawing not on his own knowledge, but on derived information, and was animated with the desire to make his narratives complete whenever new particulars came to his hand.

We cannot say to whom St. Luke was indebted; but his narrative preserves throughout so much of Aramaic style, that we may feel sure that he trusted not to oral authorities, but had some written documents from which to draw, and these set down either by, or from the lips of, some one who was in intimate

connection with Jesus and His family from the beginning to the end of His ministerial life.

This third Gospel has often been styled "the Gospel of St. Pāul," and there is no doubt that St. Luke exhibits much of the liberality of the "Apostle of the Gentiles," as we might expect from one who was a Gentile by birth. This is shown by his tracing Christ's lineage up to Adam, that thus He might be presented as the Saviour of all the world. He speaks far more of "grace," "glad tidings," "salvation," and a "Saviour," than do the other evangelists; and the parables and deeds of mercy, which he has specially related, point largely to Jesus as the Redeemer of all mankind. He proclaims the Lord as "a Light to lighten to the Gentiles," as well as to "be the glory of Israel"; he tells of Elijah's works of mercy in heathen Sarepta, and of Elisha healing the heathen Naaman. He specially sets Jesus before us as tolerant of, and finding good in, the Samaritans; and, in the parable of the Good Samaritan, choosing one of the despised race, rather than a priest or a Levite, as the embodiment of true duty. The publican also and the outcast are pictured in this Gospel, more than in the others, as the peculiar objects of care of Him who came to seek and to save. All this is in the spirit of



St. Paul, and no doubt St. Luke had drunk largely from that fountain of wide-hearted love which wells forth from every Pauline utterance. And in one instance there is a close connection in the language of the two writers. The words which St. Paul uses (1 Cor. xi. 23-25), concerning the institution of the Lord's Supper, bear a much closer resemblance to those in St. Luke (xxii. 19-20), than to the parallel narratives of St. Matthew and St. Mark. But beyond the influence of long companionship we can hardly ascribe to St. Paul any part in the work of our evangelist. The revelations made to that Apostle do not appear from any of his writings to have been of such a nature as to supply him with an exact knowledge of our Lord's actions in all His earthly ministry; and from some source or other St. Luke drew information concerning that ministry, which he deemed more precise than any which he knew to have been set forth before, and he laboured to arrange it with the utmost fidelity.

The authenticity of St. Luke's Gospel is well established. There are some allusions, or what seem to be such, to its contents, in the writings of the Apostolic Fathers; and Justin Martyr, who died soon after the middle of the second century, quotes from it, and alludes to



it several times. In a fragment "On the Resurrection," which is about the same date as the works of Justin, there is allusion made to three verses out of the last chapter of St. Luke. Hegesippus, contemporary with Justin, has two quotations from this Gospel in the scanty fragments of his writings which have been preserved to us by Eusebius; and it is mentioned in the list of New Testament writings in the Muratorian fragment on the canon, about 170 A.D. The enemies of the faith also have left us evidence of the same kind. Marcion, a heretical teacher, who flourished in the first half of the second century, desired to represent Christianity as utterly unconnected with Judaism. He taught that the Jewish law had its origin from the Demiurge (so he styled the God of the Jews), and that from his influence Christ came to set men free. With these opinions to support, Marcion must reject a large portion of the New Testament, and he accepted only ten epistles of St. Paul, and such parts of the Gospel of St. Luke as suited with his ideas. The heretical mutilation which he wrought in the third Gospel has furnished satisfactory testimony to its genuineness and authenticity, and has proved the early recognition of what has been already alluded to—that this Gospel is

largely pervaded by the spirit of the "Apostle of the Gentiles."

Tradition has dealt but little with the name of St. Luke. It has made him, but without any evidence, a painter as well as a physician, and has assigned Antioch in Syria as his birthplace. But this latter ascription may only be due to the character of his writings, which might seem most fit productions of one who was born in that city which may be styled the cradle of the Gentile Church. For men have always felt that this Gospel had a comprehensiveness which did not appear so strongly in the other three, and that its motto might fitly be the angelic words which its author alone has recorded, "good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people."

## CHAPTER III.

### THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. JOHN.

THE simplest form of tradition which has been preserved to us concerning the authorship and characteristics of this Gospel is given by Eusebius (H. E., vi. 14) from Clement of Alexandria. He says that "John, the last of the Evangelists, seeing that the material bodily facts had been set forth in the other Gospels, being urged by his friends, and divinely prompted by the Spirit, composed a spiritual Gospel."<sup>1</sup> We see from this, (1) that in the earliest times the writer of the Gospel was held to be St. John; (2) that the date of its composition was placed later than that of the rest; (3) that in character this Gospel was known to differ from the others, and that such difference was marked by calling it "a spiritual Gospel."

If we consider the Gospel according to the

<sup>1</sup> Earlier testimony concerning this Gospel is given by quotations in Theophilus of Antioch, Claudius Apollinaris (both about A.D. 180), and Clement of Rome.

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arrangement suggested by the above quotation, we shall be able to embrace the chief points which need to be dwelt on. A perusal of the book will convince any reader that its author was a Jew; for he knows the Old Testament as only a Jew would know it. He is familiar with all the opinions, prejudices, observances and party feeling which marked the chosen people from all other nations of the earth. He is also acquainted with the localities of the Holy Land, as he shews by a most careful and frequent specification of the places where events occurred: thus he speaks of Ænon as "near to Salim," of Bethesda as "by the sheep-gate," and uses many similar expressions. We may conclude also, from his abundance of minute detail, that he was an eye-witness of what he relates, as when he mentions the *six* waterpots at Cana, and tells how the house where Mary anointed the feet of Jesus was *filled with the odour of the ointment*, and how the napkin which had been about the head of Jesus was *wrapped together in a place by itself* after the Resurrection; the last words shewing the writer to be one who was at the burial, as well as an early visitor to the no longer tenanted grave. He was also an Apostle; for he is able to tell us of their discussions among themselves, of the places to

which they resorted with the Lord alone, and to explain much of the feelings of the disciples. He was a favourite Apostle ; for he knows the sentiments of Jesus, and can tell us the Lord's own reasons for what He did, and in some places goes so far as to explain that Jesus knew many things *in Himself*, a knowledge which would only be made apparent to one who was in the closest communion with the Master.

The Apostle St. John will in all points answer to these requirements, and there are some statements in the Gospel itself which seem to be conclusive on the question of its authorship. In xxi. 24, we find it stated that the Gospel was written by that disciple whom Jesus loved, and that the writer had taken a share in the incidents narrated in that chapter, and that in him St. Peter had shewn deep interest by the question which he asked of Jesus concerning his future lot. Now the list of those present on that occasion forces us to the conclusion that the beloved disciple was either one of the sons of Zebedee, or one of two other disciples whose names are not mentioned. James, the son of Zebedee, was put to death by Herod, long before this Gospel was written, and no other of the apostolic band was on such terms of intimacy with St. Peter as were the two sons

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of Zebedee. Therefore, from the interest and friendship which is more than once noticed between St. Peter and him whom Jesus loved, we are shut up to the conclusion that the writer of the Gospel was John, the son of Zebedee. And there is another small confirmatory indication that this is correct. The writer of the fourth Gospel is stricter than the other Evangelists in defining and describing the persons (as we have seen he was with respect to the places) which come into his story. But though all the others distinguish constantly the name of John "the Baptist," by attaching thereto this distinctive title, in the fourth Gospel the Baptist is simply spoken of as John. For the other Evangelists there were two persons entering into their narrative with the name of John; for the son of Zebedee, speaking of himself as him "whom Jesus loved," there was but one, and so he needed not to say "the Baptist."

St. John the Apostle was the son of Zebedee and Salome, and the brother of James. The father and sons were fishermen on the Sea of Galilee, and their home seems to have been in Tiberias. Their condition in life was such that the father had hired servants who took part in the labours of the fishing. Some have thought that Salome was the sister of the Virgin Mary;

and if this were so, it would explain much of the close attachment between our Lord and the sons of Zebedee. She was one of those women who ministered to Christ of their substance, which is another indication of the easy condition of life in which St. John was born. He was first a disciple of John the Baptist, and from the Baptist's teaching became a follower of Jesus. He was one of the three chosen to be with Christ at the raising of Jairus' daughter, at the Transfiguration, and in the agony at Gethsemane. With Andrew, these three form the first group in all the lists of the twelve, and these four were with Jesus at the time of that discourse in which He foretold the destruction of Jerusalem. Our Lord gave to the sons of Zebedee the name "Boanerges," which is explained to mean "sons of thunder." It has been thought that the name was given in reference to that impetuosity of character which John shews when he tells (Mark ix. 38; Luke ix. 49) how they forbade one who was casting out devils in the name of Christ, because he followed not with them; and which they both exhibited when they desired to bring fire from heaven upon the Samaritan villagers who refused to receive Jesus (Luke ix. 53, 54). It was the same fervour of temper which induced



them to ask, through their mother, for places at the right and left hand of Christ in His kingdom (Matt. xx. 21). St. John was joined with St. Peter in the preparation of the Passover Supper, and asked of Christ who it was that should betray Him; he obtained admission for St. Peter into the high priest's palace; he was present at the foot of the cross, and received the Virgin Mary into his charge; he was among the early visitors to the sepulchre, and was of the company to whom Christ shewed Himself by the Sea of Galilee. In the Acts he remains by the side of St. Peter during the events of the first eight chapters, after which we only know from the New Testament that at some time (Gal. ii. 9) he met St. Paul, perhaps in Jerusalem, and that, as he tells us himself (Rev. i. 9), he was "in Patmos for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ."

Tradition relates many further details concerning the Apostle beyond what we learn from Scripture; that he preached the Gospel in Asia, and after his banishment to Patmos returned and settled at Ephesus, and exercised there a supervision over the Churches of Asia; that his life was prolonged until the time of Trajan (A.D. 98-117). There are stories preserved of his winning back to virtue and Christianity a

young man who after baptism had fallen into evil ways, and become the chief of a band of robbers ; how he fled from a bath in which the heretic Cerinthus was present, lest the building should fall down on one who denied the reality of Christ's incarnation ; and how in his old age, when he could not preach, he would be borne to the church and say only, " Little children, love one another ;" answering those who asked for something more, that " to do this is to fulfil the Lord's command, and that will be enough."

It has been handed down from the very earliest times, on the authority of Polycrates, who was bishop of Ephesus before the close of the second century, that St. John died and was buried in that city. Tradition also is agreed that his Gospel was written there.

With reference to the age of the Gospel, we have a striking notice in the Muratorian fragment, which dates back to A.D. 170. St. John can hardly have settled in Ephesus till some time after St. Paul's visit to Miletus, which may be placed about A.D. 60. The fragment says that " At the entreaties of his fellow-disciples and his bishops," the writing of the Gospel was undertaken. We can gather from such a statement that the Apostle had presided for some time over the Ephesian Church before writing

the Gospel ; for such a request from such persons would not be made at once on his arrival. The late date of the Gospel is confirmed, too, by the language of Clement of Alexandria (A.D. 165–220), already quoted, and by the testimony of Irenæus (A.D. 130–200), who, after mentioning the other three Gospels, adds, “ Then John, the disciple of the Lord, who also leaned on His breast, himself put forth his Gospel, while residing at Ephesus in Asia.” That the later date of the Gospel is fully borne out by internal evidence, we shall see when we consider the contents of St. John’s Gospel in comparison with the Synoptic Gospels. If we inquire into the object of the writer, we have his own statement near the close of the book (xx. 30–31) : “ Many other things did Jesus in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book ; but these are written that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye may have life in His name.” St. John did not then, any more than the Synoptists, undertake to write a biography of Jesus. He was only guided to leave on record those portions of Christ’s history which were likely to win men to believe in Him as the Son of God, the Saviour of the world.

It has often been pointed out that the language

of some parts of St. John's Gospel has much reference to the heretical teaching which was current in the latter part of the first century. And this is true, but it would be a mistake to suppose that St. John wrote this, his view of Christ's life, with the purpose of refuting such heresies. The heretics denied that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God. Any life of Him, therefore, which kept these truths constantly in view, would be sure, not only to seem, but to be, a refutation of such errors, and the language of the Apostle may no doubt in some parts have taken a form which the currency of heretical doctrines in his day would necessarily cause the true teaching to assume. Nor should we be right in saying that St. John wrote to supplement the records of the other Evangelists. He does relate much which is by them omitted, but it is done because those parts of the Lord's history seemed most suited for his purpose, to lead men to faith in Christ, and so to eternal life, and not because they had not found place elsewhere.

The plan of St. John's Gospel is very clear. In the prologue (chap. i. 1-18) the Apostle speaks of the Word: first, in His own nature from eternity; next, how He was revealed to and rejected by men; and then, how, by His

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incarnation, the invisible God was made known through the Son.

After this, from i. 19 to xii. 50, the Gospel is occupied with those words and actions by which Jesus revealed Himself generally among men as the Son of God. In these chapters the writer has shewn, on each advance in Christ's revelation, how some believed on Him, but also how the unbelief of men arrayed itself ever more and more in opposition to the teaching of Jesus concerning His divine nature.

At the outset of this section (i. 15-ii. 11) we are told how the Baptist repeatedly bore witness to Jesus as the Son of God, whom the Holy Ghost had made known to him when He came to be baptized; how those who first followed the Lord followed Him because they looked on Him as the promised Messiah; and how by His beginning of miracles He manifested forth His glory in such wise that His disciples believed on Him.

This is followed (ii. 12-25) by the story of some of the deeds and words of Jesus among His own people, to whom He first came; and who, with Jewish prejudice, and the desire to walk by sight, and not by faith, asked for some sign after their own hearts; and even when they, in some degree, followed Him, were so

unstable in their belief, that Christ could put no trust in their adherence. The conversation with Nicodemus (iii.) shows how Jesus had to break down the Jewish notions concerning the earthly manifestation of the kingdom of God, and to lead His hearers, by paths utterly unknown even to "a master in Israel," to a knowledge that the kingdom was to be spiritual. And along with this light He also gives some hints of those heavenly things which were even still less appreciated by Nicodemus and his fellows. The Jewish mind was engrossed by externals, pictured to us by the Evangelist in his account of their disputings concerning the purifying of John's baptism; and though the Baptist once more testifies to such disputants that Christ is the Son of God, into whose hand the Father hath given all things, the nation will not be aroused to the need of a spiritual regeneration.

Christ next (iv.) goes to the Samaritans, and to them explains more clearly than He could to Israel that the true worship is a worship, not at Jerusalem, or on Gerizim, but in the living temples of the heart. He then passes on to Galilee, and by His second miracle manifests Himself to be the Lord of life.

In the next chapters (v.-xi.) St. John has



placed Christ before men as being truly the Son of God, because He is the source of life and light, and that both in word and work His attitude toward men is that of love. First, by the cure of the cripple at the pool of Bethesda, and by the discourse which follows it, Jesus is presented as the source of eternal life, and as Him unto whom the Scriptures bear testimony. In like manner, by the feeding of the five thousand (vi.) His act proclaims what His words soon express, "I am the Bread of life." While on the great day of the feast, His visit unto which is next described, the same lesson is heard once more, when He cries, "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink ;" and that the figures under which His teaching was thus conveyed might not fail to be appreciated, in the next chapter (viii.) He makes it clear what the bread of life and water of life signify, by the exposition, "If any man keep My sayings, he shall never see death." And as of life, so of light does St. John (ix.) shew Christ to be the source. He tells us of the cure by Jesus of the blind man, whose affliction was sent that the works of God might be made manifest in him ; and, by the colloquy which followed, gives to the outward work of power its inward significance in the Lord's own words: "For



judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see, and that they which see might be made blind."

Christ's discourses of Himself (x.) as the Door by which men may enter into life, and as the Good Shepherd, who giveth his life for the sheep, complete the teaching concerning the character of Jesus; but this lesson of His perfect love, the Evangelist has pointed most strongly by the narrative of the raising of Lazarus (xi.), which tells us in act, as well as in word, how "Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus;" and where the Lord's affectionate solicitude for the desolate sisters, and His sympathy with human sorrow, makes even the Jews confess, "Behold, how He loved him."

Through all this narrative St. John never fails to record that the teaching of Jesus was diversely received; but, as if to emphasize this still more, he gives in the chapter (xii.) which follows special examples of this varied reception. First he shews us Mary anointing the feet of Him who had set before her "the better part;" then the priests in consultation, anxious to kill not only Jesus, but Lazarus also. Then we hear the enthusiastic hosannas of the crowd as He rides into Jerusalem, while the Pharisees murmur that "the world is gone after Him."

We see Greeks coming that they may look on Him, and, as He speaks to the crowd around, in astonishment they inquire, what is meant by the lifting up of the Son of man. And on the whole survey the Evangelist pronounces, "They believed not in Him; their hearts were hardened; they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God;" and closes with the saying of Jesus, "The word which I have spoken, the same, in the last day, shall judge him that rejecteth Me." "I came not to judge the world, but to save the world."

From xiii. 1-xx. 29 the Gospel deals with Christ's revelation of Himself to His more immediate followers, first by His discourses preparing them for what awaited them at the hands of unbelievers, and also revealing to them the source of power which should aid them in their work when He was no more with them; then by His death and the proof of the verity of His resurrection winning at last the doubting Thomas to cry with a faith as complete as that of the rest, "My Lord and my God."

The discourses in this section extend over five chapters (xiii.-xvii.), and are introduced by that great act of humility, the washing of the feet of the disciples, even of him whom Christ knew was to be His betrayer, that He might

enforce the lesson, "Love one another, as I have loved you." The words of the Lord are all words of comfort, pointing onward to hopes of heaven, and promising an answer to prayer on earth. But still larger are the promises which relate to the mission of the Comforter, and to the close union which shall be maintained between Christ and His faithful followers. They may sorrow because He is gone, but their sorrow shall be turned into joy by the hope of His return. In the last of these chapters (xvii.) is the solemn prayer of Jesus to the Father, first for Himself, then for the disciples, afterwards for those who should believe through their preaching; and it closes with the words which St. John, above the rest of the twelve, would be disposed to dwell on, "That the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them, and I in them."

Then is given (xviii., xix.) the story of the Passion, the same with, though differing from, the narrative of the Synoptists, followed (xx.) by the Resurrection, and the three appearances of Jesus to Mary Magdalene, to the ten Apostles, and then again to them after seven days, when Thomas was in their company. After this, St. John (xx. 30, 31) tells us of the purpose which his Gospel has in view, and

afterwards (xxi.), as a conclusion, relates how Christ shewed Himself to the seven by the Sea of Galilee, where He gave His commission to St. Peter, and foretold how that Apostle would glorify God by his death. Then, after a brief notice of a question concerning himself, which was asked of Christ by Peter, and the answer to which was misunderstood, he concludes with a repetition of the statement that there was abundance of material at hand from which to draw, had his object been to record concerning Jesus all that could be written.

In comparing St. John's Gospel with the other three, we feel at once what is meant by those who have spoken of it as "the Gospel of the Holy Spirit." The simple elementary teaching of the earlier Evangelists has, at the time when St. John writes, been developed by the Spirit's agency in the growing Church of Christ, and made clear in its application to the hearts of men. The Synoptists generally relate Christ's actions as narrators of a history which they leave to have its effect on the hearers, without further comment. St. John, on the contrary, nearly always ranges after his narratives of what Jesus did some account of the teaching with which the Master supplemented His works, and also a notice of the way in

which that teaching moved both friends and foes. The writer is looking back over the space which had intervened between the life of Christ on earth and the date of his own composition, and by the Spirit's light can read the meaning of much which in the early days of Christian preaching could be rather felt than spoken.

But though there be in St. John's Gospel this wider and deeper view of the significance of all that Christ did, we see that the circumstances, whose meaning St. John has grown to grasp more fully, were the same as are related in the earlier writings. He knows, like the other three, of the Baptist and his work (i. 19), and that Christ was baptized by him (i. 32); he knows of the twelve (vi. 67), though he gives no list of them, and knows, too, of the prominent place occupied among them by St. Peter (i. 40); he knows of the life at Nazareth (i. 46), of the dwelling at Capernaum (ii. 12), of the mother and the brethren (vi. 42; vii. 3, etc.), of Martha and Mary (xi. 1, 2), and of the ministering women (xix. 25) who often accompanied Jesus, and were present at the crucifixion. His mention of these matters is all by implication, but shews that St. John, though choosing often different materials, and using them in a different way, is still writing of the same life-history.

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All the four Gospels are mere fragments of what could have been written of our Lord's life, hence the possibility of such difference as there is between St. John's Gospel and the others, and hence, too, we can understand how from the Synoptists we might go away with the thought that Jesus went up but once to Jerusalem, while from St. John we learn that such a visit was made at the commencement of His ministry, as well as at its close, and that there was at least one intervening visit also. Yet here and there the Synoptists let fall hints that they were aware of more numerous visits. "How often would I have gathered thy children" (Luke xiii. 34) cannot but imply that the Lord had more than once before been at Jerusalem, and laboured to win a hearing, though in vain. So, too, St. Mark (i. 14) indicates that the scene of labour was not always Galilee, when he says, "Now after that John was delivered up, Jesus came into Galilee preaching the Gospel of God." It is nowhere said in the first three Gospels that the ministry of Jesus lasted but one year, and we can find many gaps in each of the narratives which give room enough for all the events recorded by St. John.

It has also been said that the Synoptists set forth Christ as a great Reformer, who went

about rebuking His countrymen for their hypocritical regard for outward forms, and for their want of all spiritual religion, and so provoked their hatred ; while St. John pictures the same result as arising because He represented Himself as the Son of God. But we have only to remember that it is written in the Synoptists that (Matt. x. 1) He gave His disciples power to work miracles ; how He said (Matt. xi. 27), "All things are delivered unto Me of My Father ;" how His life was to be (Matt. xx. 28) "a ransom for many ;" how (Mark ii. 5) He said, "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee ;" how (Luke xxiv. 49) He declares that He will send the promise of His Father upon the disciples ; and we see that in the first three Gospels, as well as in the fourth, Jesus claims by act and word to be the very Son of God sent forth to redeem the world, and appointed hereafter to be the Judge of quick and dead.

The connection of St. John's Gospel with the Apocalypse may better be noticed in full when we speak of the latter book. It may, however, here be stated, that the position of that book among the New Testament writings lies between the Synoptists and the fourth Gospel. It is later than the earlier Gospels, for in it we see in activity those forms of error against which



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St. Paul speaks so strongly in some of his later Epistles. We see the evil work of Judaizers (ii. 2, 9, etc.), of the deniers of the faith (ii. 13), and of those "whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things" (ii. 14). We see also the Church in stern conflicts with idolatry (ii. 20). But all is dealt with in the language and under the figures of the older covenant, and even the glorious triumph of Christ and His cause is described as the coming down from heaven of a New Jerusalem. For in the Apocalypse the first of Christ's "comings" is yet in the future; the visitation of God has not yet fallen upon the Holy City. How different from this is the tone of the Gospel of St. John will be seen at once. There the changes that shall be wrought through Christ's religion are changes in the heart of man, and no earthly reign of the Saviour is contemplated. He is a King indeed, but at the right hand of the Father. Nor is there any thought of the renewal of the Jewish ritual. It is nowhere seen but to be discarded as a worn-out garment. But most of all does the Gospel advance beyond the Apocalypse in its revelation of God's love in Christ, and of His work in the souls of men through the Holy Ghost, in the prominence given to the Redeemer rather than to the Judge.

The close connection between the Gospel of St. John and the first Epistle cannot be overlooked. They are from the same hand, and it is not easy to decide which was written first. It has been well pointed out that there is a distinction between them in this, that while in the Gospel the writer endeavours to prove, from the discourses and actions of Jesus, that He was the Son of God, the contrary is the aim of the Epistle. There the writer attacks those errors which deny that the Son of God was the Man Jesus Christ. The Gospel is didactic, meant to teach men all that the Apostle had learnt from life with the Master: the Epistle is controversial, and combats some of the earliest false doctrines that prevailed in the Christian Church.

With respect to the date of St. John's Gospel, beside the notice of it in the Muratorian fragment already mentioned, its language is quoted by Justin Martyr some twenty years earlier than that date, and inferentially we have assurance that it was known both to Papias and Polycarp. St. John appears to have lived on to the very close of the first century. From what has been said of the resemblance between the first Epistle and the Gospel, it is not improbable that the Gospel (which had been given out by oral teaching for many years before it was

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published in writing), may have been composed several years before the Apostle's death, and the last chapter added by him at a later date to make it more complete. It was widely known as St. John's work some time before the close of the second century, indeed so early that many could have testified to the falsity of such ascription, had it not been supported by indisputable evidence.<sup>1</sup> This early acceptance of the Gospel entirely overthrows the arguments of those who would assign to the work a date of about A.D. 165. Such a general acceptance as it had by that time received, makes it manifest that it must have been some time in circulation, and so must have been first set forth when many could have disproved its claim, had it not been truly what (though the writer veils his name, and only gives to himself the tender appellation of the "disciple whom Jesus loved") the book claims to be, "the Gospel according to St. John."

<sup>1</sup> A Commentary on the Gospel was written by Heraclion (about 175 A.D.), and we learn from him that there were already various readings found in the different copies to which he had access, a statement which implies a considerable amount of circulation of the Gospel previous to his time.

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

THIS book was not from the first called by the name which it now bears. The oldest known MS. has for its title simply "Acts," and the contents of the book might very well be thus described. The present title is misleading ; for in the work there is no detailed account of the acts of any of the Apostles except Peter and Paul. St. John appears on three occasions, but merely as the companion of St. Peter ; James the son of Zebedee is mentioned only in the notice of his execution by Herod ; while to the acts of Stephen, Philip, Timothy and Silas, who were not Apostles, a considerable space is devoted. We can judge how the present title arose. In early Christian times, writings were common under such names as "The Acts of Timothy," "The Acts of Peter and Paul," etc. To distinguish the canonical book from these apocryphal works, the original name was probably extended, and so it came to have the

fuller, but incorrect, title which it now generally bears.

All tradition ascribes the authorship of the book to the writer of the third Gospel; and Eusebius, who lived A.D. 325, says,<sup>1</sup> "Luke, by race a native of Antioch and by profession a physician, having associated mainly with Paul, and having companied with the rest of the Apostles less closely, has left us examples of that healing of souls which he acquired from them, in two inspired books, the Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles." Tertullian, who lived 125 years earlier, speaks<sup>2</sup> of the descent of the Holy Ghost, and of Peter going up to the housetop to pray, as matters mentioned in the commentary of St. Luke. He also speaks in another place<sup>3</sup> of those disciples of John, mentioned Acts xix. 2, 3, who had not even heard of the gift of the Holy Ghost. Similar allusions are to be found in Clement of Alexandria (A.D. 190), and in Irenæus, about the same date. Cyprian, who wrote A.D. 250, and Origen, who died A.D. 253, both speak of this book as "divine Scripture." The earliest known quotation from it is in a letter,<sup>4</sup> written A.D. 177,

<sup>1</sup> *H.E.*, ii. 11.

<sup>2</sup> *De jejuniis*, 10.

<sup>3</sup> *De Baptismo*, 10.

<sup>4</sup> Preserved to us in Eusebius, *H.E.*, v. 2.

from the Churches of southern Gaul to the Christians in Asia and Phrygia. There the martyrdom of Stephen is spoken of, and his prayer, as recorded in the Acts, is quoted. Some earlier indications that the book was known are found in the writings of Justin Martyr (A.D. 140), who alludes to the events of the day of Pentecost, and to the doings of Simon Magus. Thus to the authorship and early acceptance of this book we have testimony from very primitive times, and in many directions.

The history contained in the Acts terminates about A.D. 62 or 63, with a notice which carries us to the close of St. Paul's first imprisonment at Rome. The writer was so closely connected with that Apostle, that had St. Paul been already dead before the Acts were completed and put forth, we may almost certainly conclude that the event would have been noticed; and also that the fall of Jerusalem would not have been unmarked, had that event happened ere the book was finished. The date at which it was sent forth may therefore be placed somewhere between A.D. 63 and 70.

Mention has been made of all that we know of St. Luke's life in speaking of the Gospel. The author dedicates his second work to the same Theophilus to whom the first was ad-

dressed ; and the opening sentence of the Acts gives us the key to the character of them both. The former was an account of all that Jesus *began* to do and teach before His ascension ; the latter, of what His Apostles *began* to do and teach after they had received the promised gift of the Holy Ghost. The Acts might very appropriately be named a history of beginnings. The author tells us (i. 7) that before His ascension, Christ marked out the course which should be taken in the publication of the Gospel : “Ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth.” With the remembrance of this direction constantly in mind, St. Luke proceeds to shew how it was carried out in each of these appointed spheres of labour. He mentions the eleven Apostles in his first chapter, as if to imply at the outset that each one of them took his part in the prescribed work of evangelization, though it does not come within the writer’s plan to describe what was the share of each. For the same reason he tells how the number of the twelve was made complete by the choice of Matthias in the room of Judas. This done, he turns to his appointed work, the account of what Jesus *began* to do by His Spirit through the ministration of the



Apostles and their companions. He sets before us the disciples preaching in Jerusalem, till it was declared (v. 28) that "the whole city was filled with their doctrine." After this beginning, we hear but little of the work of preaching in Jerusalem.

The next section of the book shews us how the teaching of the Church was extended into Judæa and Samaria. To make this intelligible, St. Luke finds it needful to describe with some detail the events which led to the death of Stephen; and because Stephen's speech before his martyrdom forms the defence for the universalism of Christianity, which the Jews could not or would not accept, we have the speech given at some length. The address was intended to shew to Israel how God's purpose from of old had been to offer His grace unto all nations. We can discern from the language which Stephen employs that the provocation, which had roused the Jews against him, was his teaching that God was not the God of the Jew alone, and that His worship was no longer to be restricted to the temple at Jerusalem. Such utterances were the natural prelude to the extension of the preaching of Christ's Gospel beyond the Holy City, and among those who were not Jews.

To prove to his hearers the truth of his posi-

tion, Stephen carries them to their own history and prophecies. He points out that it was not in the Holy Land, but in Mesopotamia, that God first appeared to their father Abraham, that God was with him also as he dwelt in Haran; and that when at length the patriarch was brought into Canaan, the land of promise, the land so revered by his latest descendants, God gave him no permanent possession therein, nor to his descendants for several generations. He goes on to speak of the sojourn in Egypt, and shews how God was near unto His people there too, blessing them, so that, in spite of all their adversities, they multiplied exceedingly; and how at last He sent them Moses to be their deliverer. It was God exhibiting His watchful care, far away from Canaan, that caused Moses to be trained, first in the court of Pharaoh, and afterwards in the desert of Midian, that he might be fit to stand before the king, as well as to lead the nation in their wanderings through the desert. God had specially manifested His presence on Sinai, and had for forty years shewn His tokens of favour unto Israel, all irrespective of the place where they might be.

With the mention of Moses, Stephen makes a slight digression, that he may compare the rebellious outbreaks of the Israelites with the

treatment which Jesus had received from the Jews. But he soon comes back again, and points out that the tabernacle, and with it the visible sign of God's presence, was for forty years moving about from place to place in the desert, and that even after the settlement in Canaan there was no thought of erecting a permanent edifice, where alone Jehovah should be worshipped, until the days of David. That monarch was not allowed himself to carry out his wish; and when permission was granted to Solomon to build a temple, the voices of the prophets still testified that "the Most High did not dwell in temples made with hands." He was throned in heaven, with earth as His footstool; and was the Maker and Preserver, not of one race, but of all men.

This defence, which to the minds of the Jewish multitude would be an admission of everything with which they had charged Stephen, "blasphemous words against this holy place and the law," seems to have aroused the indignation of the hearers at this point. The speaker therefore does not continue his line of defence, drawn though it was from sources which ought to have been most convincing, but concludes with a rebuke, in which he tells the angry crowd that, with all their profession of zeal for the law,

they had not kept the true spirit of that heaven-bestowed guidance which had been committed to them. Provoked still more at this, they stoned the speaker to death ; and, by their persecution of his companions, led to the spread of the new doctrines, according to Christ's injunction.

The speech of Stephen appears worthy to be dwelt on, because it is the defence of that wider extension of the Gospel preaching which the writer of the Acts now proceeds to notice. He tells how the doctrines of Christ were carried forth into Judæa and Samaria ; and, as if to indicate from the very first how widely the message was to be spread, Philip is sent to baptize the Ethiopian eunuch, in whom we see the firstfruits of the Church of Christ in Africa. But that branch of the Church's history is carried no further ; nor have we afterwards any other notice of Philip, save that from *xxi. 8* we find he made his subsequent home in the seaboard city of Cæsarea, a place fitted, from its mixed population, more perhaps than any other in Palestine, for the scene of labour of one who from the first had been divinely sent to be a missionary to the Gentiles.

The two histories of Saul's conversion (*ix.*) and of Peter's visit to Cornelius (*x.*) are, as we may

say, companion pictures to set before us the two lines along which the conversion of the Gentiles was to be carried out ; first among those who, like Cornelius, knew something of the true God through the medium of Judaism ; then among those who must be brought away from their vanities and idolatry, to the worship of the living Lord of all.

As soon as Peter's share in this beginning is accomplished, and he has twice (xi. 4-17 ; xv. 7-11) borne witness to the brethren that what he did in going to Cornelius was prompted by a revelation from heaven, and that the propriety of his action had been stamped with the testimony of the Holy Ghost, St. Luke dismisses him—the most energetic of the original twelve, who lived, as we know, and wrought, as we may be sure, for many years afterwards—out of his narrative altogether, because the other *beginnings* of Gospel preaching among the heathen seemed to be more lively set forth in the career of St. Paul, the chief agent in carrying the Christian faith to the ends of the earth.

Yet, as we read what St. Luke has recorded of that Apostle's work, we find still only the story of how churches and societies were founded, how Paul planted, how the initial steps were taken at each place to which he came

in his missionary journeys. Whenever he visits a Christian station for a second time, we have very slight notice of anything which he either said or did ; all is embraced in the general expression, "confirming the churches." There is but one exception to this statement, and that is in the solemn address (chap. xx.) delivered at Miletus to the elders from the Church of Ephesus. This St. Luke has recorded with some fulness, because it seemed to be a sort of valedictory address to all the Churches. The Apostle was going to Jerusalem with his life in his hand, and knew not at the time of this solemn parting, but that his missionary labours were now near their close. This of itself is enough to account for the greater prominence given to that speech in St. Luke's narrative.

But no attempt is made by him to supply a history of St. Paul, any more than of St. Peter ; for at the close of his book, as soon as we have been told how the Gospel was preached by the great Apostle, first to the Jews, and then to the Gentiles, in the Imperial city, which then represented the whole civilized world, the writer lays aside his pen. He gives a hint, but no more, of the duration of St. Paul's imprisonment. His task was at an end. He does not even tell of the release of the Apostle, though

himself the companion of his time of restraint. He has described the work which he undertook to describe, the *beginnings* of the Christian Church in all those quarters of which the departing Jesus had spoken.

As the writer of the Acts had the same object in his view throughout, namely, to shew how, through the Spirit's guidance, Christianity was planted and extended, first among the Jews, and afterwards among the heathen, it is not to be wondered at if in all parts of his work there are found many features of similarity. The book consists of two portions, that which concerns the preaching to the Jews, and which is most connected with the name of St. Peter; and that which, in the main, deals with the evangélization of the Gentiles, in which the figure of St. Paul alone stands prominent. St. Paul has told us how on one occasion he felt bound to withstand the doings of St. Peter, and some modern critics have made this statement a basis for the supposition that in the apostolic age there was a rupture of such a kind as to form two distinct schools of Christian teaching. Such critics have endeavoured to shew that St. Luke's work in the Acts is an attempt to reconcile the conflicting parties by giving prominence to all those matters in which the



actions and words of the two great Apostles were in accord, and they have for this purpose dwelt long on the similarity which exists between the two sections of the history.

We know that in later times the Judaizing party of the Christian world did disparage St. Paul and all his work, and even write of him constantly as "the enemy" of St. Peter.<sup>1</sup> But there is no evidence to shew that there was any division among Christians in St. Paul's time, except such as he himself rebukes when writing to the Corinthians (1 Cor. i. 12), and which was of such sort as to prove the existence in that Church of an Apollos' party, as well as one of Peter and one of Paul. There can be no doubt that St. Luke knew of St. Paul's bitter feeling against those Jews who among the Gentiles made the only door to Christianity to be through the Mosaic law. But he knew also that the Apostle's desire and prayer for Israel was ever that they might be saved, and he may very naturally and laudably have wished to set the teaching of St. Paul in a truer light than some men had of it. He may have desired to shew (what is in effect often stated in the Epistles) that it was from no

<sup>1</sup> See the Epistle of Peter to James, which precedes the Clementine Homilies.

undervaluing of Jewish ordinances for Jews that St. Paul taught the Gentiles not to observe them, but because the yoke of the law had proved too heavy for Israel to bear, and, by a revelation, of which St. Peter had been chosen as the recipient, God had now made offer of His mercy through Christ to all men everywhere who should repent and believe.

It was to place St. Paul's work in such a light before the people of Jerusalem that James and the elders (Acts xxi. 20, *seqq.*) counselled the Apostle to take upon him the vow of the Nazarites, to which St. Paul readily consented ; and the same aim probably guided St. Luke in his choice of those portions of St. Paul's history which he has here placed on record. That the tone of the historian should differ from that of the Apostle is to be expected from the different purpose which their writings had to serve, and the different times at which they were composed. St. Luke has compiled a history of events several years after they had occurred. St. Paul, writing (for example) to the Galatians, was full of grief of heart at the language which the Judaizers were using at the very time in disparagement of his apostolate, and at the harm which was ensuing to the Churches of Galatia. For this reason it is that,

though his writings shew him to have had the humblest thoughts of himself, he dwells so fully on his own independent calling, tells how the brethren in Jerusalem were advanced by him as much as he by them, and in the strongest language exposes the false Christianity of those by whom the Galatians were bewitched. But there is nothing in all this to warrant the conclusion that in these primitive days there existed any such division as they maintain who write of a Petrine party and a Pauline party, as if the two great Apostles had been exponents of a different Gospel.

There is another circumstance which has made the resemblance great between the language of the two divisions of the Acts. St. Luke has, in this book, *edited* his materials. He has cast the information in his own mould, and thus made the style of the book very uniform. This is especially noticeable in the accounts of the apostolic speeches. They all commence very nearly in the same fashion, and are generally introduced with some notice of the look, movement, or gesture of the speakers. If this be the case in one detail, it is presumably so in all, and we may conclude that we have not in St. Luke's reports always the very words of the speakers, but such a draft of them

as the writer judged to be best suited for his purpose. Where fulness seemed needful, we have a longer report; where a brief summary would suffice, the speech is given in abstract. And thus the whole history comes to have one complexion.

But it is not well to make too little of such difficulties as do arise from a comparison of the history in the Acts with the letters of St. Paul. That there should be difficulties, when the authors wrote in entire independence of each other, the one as an actor in the events, the other as the compiler of a history from materials collected from various quarters, need not surprise us. But an examination of some one of these will shew us how much of corroboration each writer gives to the other, and how capable of reconciliation are many of the points on which they seem to disagree.

Compare, for instance, the narratives of St. Paul's visits to Jerusalem in the Acts, with the notice of those visits in the Epistle to the Galatians. In Acts ix. 26-30, we learn that Saul, after his conversion, came to Jerusalem, but was not received by the disciples till an explanation had been given to them by Barnabas; that then the new convert went in and out among them, and spake boldly in the name of

Jesus, disputing with the Greek-speaking Jews, until they sought to kill him, upon which he was sent by the brethren down to Cæsarea, and thence to Tarsus. In the Epistle (Gal. i. 18-24) St. Paul tells us that on this occasion he abode with Peter fifteen days, and beside him saw, of the Apostles, only James. Afterwards he came into Syria and Cilicia, and was unknown by face unto the Churches of Judæa, only they heard that "he which persecuted us in times past, now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed." These two accounts are clearly, the one, history; the other, St. Paul's representation to the Galatians of such part of that history as would speak most strongly of the independent character of his apostolic work. It would have been foreign to his purpose to mention the conduct of Barnabas in such a statement, while, when we are told in the Acts that his preaching in Jerusalem was to the Greek-speaking Jews, and not to the Christian congregation, light is thrown upon his statement in the Epistle that he was unknown to the Judæan Churches.

The Apostle's second visit is only mentioned in the Acts (xi. 29-xii. 25). There we are told that Barnabas and Saul were sent from Antioch to carry relief to the brethren in Judæa; that

they came to Jerusalem during a period of persecution. James, the brother of John, had been slain, Peter imprisoned, while James, the Lord's brother, was not with the congregation. When their business was ended, they returned to Antioch, and carried John Mark back with them. We can find reason enough why St. Paul makes no mention of such a journey as this in his letter to the Galatians. There was no communication between him and the other Apostles, and so the visit supplied nothing that could illustrate the argument of his Epistle. The two messengers probably only saw such confidential members of the Church as could receive their money, some of those who assembled at the house of Mary, the mother of John Mark, and this done, departed speedily, taking the young kinsman of Barnabas with them out of the troubles.

The third visit is described (Acts xv. 1-31, and Gal. ii. 1-11). The history gives the account of the synod at Jerusalem, gathered to consult about the troubles of the Church at Antioch on account of the Jewish teachers. Paul and Barnabas, with others, had been sent from Antioch. The narrative tells how the persons who supported the cause of the Judaizers were "certain of the sect of the Pharisees which

believed;" how in a public assembly of the Church a discussion took place, in the course of which Paul and Barnabas gave an account of what God had wrought among the uncircumcised Gentiles through their ministration, and a decree was passed to be communicated to the Churches which had been disturbed by Jewish teaching. In the Epistle we have mention made of Titus as a companion of St. Paul, and we are told that the Apostle went up to Jerusalem "by revelation;" that a question was raised about the circumcision of Titus, which St. Paul refused to allow; that there were private conferences among the brethren, while little notice is found of the public meeting, and none at all of the decree of the synod.

When we compare the two accounts, we have clear proof that it was not the Church at Jerusalem which was in opposition to St. Paul, but only some Pharisaic professors; that with the pillars of the Church the Apostle was at one, and they gave him the right hand of fellowship, wishing him "God speed" in his work, and recognizing that God was with him in what he had already done. The non-mention of Titus in the Acts, and the full account of his case given to the Galatians, is what we should expect. St. Luke has no occasion to dwell on



any individual instance when he records the general decree. St. Paul mentions the special case in his letter, because his action therein was the best evidence he could give the Galatians of his independence. That St. Paul had a spiritual admonition to go where the Church of Antioch was designing to send him, is exactly paralleled by two statements about one and the same event found elsewhere in the Acts. In ix. 20 we are told that the brethren brought Paul to Cæsarea, to remove him out of danger while in xxii. 21 the writer records that it was God who in a vision bade the Apostle depart from Jerusalem. That the Spirit should influence the Church to send, and the Apostle to go, does not make of the two accounts any contradiction. The omission of any mention of the council and of the decree is a greater difficulty, but is not inexplicable. In the private conferences spoken of in the Epistle, there would be more opportunity for the influence of the older Apostles to exert itself on St. Paul, and it is on this point that he is anxious to assure the Galatians of his equality with the rest of the twelve. Then the decree related in its origin to the Churches of Antioch and that part of Syria, and there is no reason to suppose that it would be felt necessary to communicate

it to every Church, while for St. Paul to mention it in his Epistle would have done very little to demonstrate that independence and equality in his apostolic work, which was now called in question among the Galatians. As we look at the history with only these two documents to enlighten us, we may (perhaps must) feel a need for further light. The decree of the synod was so antagonistic to that teaching which was wrecking St. Paul's labours, that we fail to account for the omission of all mention of it. But there is so much of accord and mutual confirmation in the two accounts, that we feel unable to doubt that there was a reason, and a good one, though we know it not, why St. Paul preferred to rest on his own apostolic authority in this question with the Galatians, rather than bring forward the decision which had been issued for the pacification of the Churches of Syria.

Of such a nature are most of the questions which modern criticism has raised about the Acts. When, however, we consider the multitude of minute points in which (as has been shown by Paley<sup>1</sup> and others following in his

<sup>1</sup> The *Horæ Paulinæ* is devoted to an examination of undesigned coincidences and confirmations which are found by a comparison of St. Paul's letters with the Acts.

steps) the history is undesignedly corroborated by the allusions and statements in St. Paul's Epistles, we at once recognize how strong a case is made out for the veracity of St. Luke's narrative, and feel sure that, could we have received a full history, instead of the mere selection of events which it fell in with his object to make, we should have had a complete elucidation of such difficulties as now must perhaps ever remain unsolved.

The great value of the Acts is that from it we learn the first steps taken for the establishment of the Church of Christ. The sudden rise of Christianity into importance after the death of Jesus is explained by the pentecostal gift, according to His promise in the Gospels. The character of the first preaching is set before us in the discourses of St. Peter, St. Stephen, and St. Paul, and we are shewn how, by the gift of the Spirit, there grew in Christ's ministers the power to grasp, in all their meaning, those truths which they were intended to publish to the world. We see, moreover, the way in which Christian societies grew, and Christian teaching developed. At first we behold the Christian body in attendance on the Jewish temple services, and, with the exception of their private meetings for the breaking of bread, differing

little from devout Jews. But before the history closes, Christianity has been spread among the heathen, its teachers have seen that the Jewish law must pass away, and that their message is one for all men everywhere, whomsoever the Lord may call. But though this book relates only the history of the beginnings of the Church, we can gather from it every truth which is found in the Apostles' creed, and thus, though being but a summary, it prefigures the potentiality of the Church throughout all ages.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE PAULINE EPISTLES.

#### *Introduction.*

THE sacred books of the Christian religion differ from all other sacred books in their form as well as in their contents. A large portion of them<sup>1</sup> is composed of letters written by the chief teachers to the various Churches. The needs of the infant Church made this a necessity. Christianity was to be spread through all the world, and a very large step was made in its diffusion during the lifetime of St. Paul. But her chief ministers were few in number for the work to which they went forth, while the newly founded Churches were scattered through many provinces. It was therefore only by letters that the necessary counsel, guidance, instruction and exhortation could be dispersed to the various far distant congregations.

And among the New Testament Epistles

<sup>1</sup> The Apocalypse may be classed with Epistles. It is St. John's Epistle to the Seven Churches of Asia.

those of St. Paul hold the foremost place. Leaving the authorship of the Epistle to the Hebrews an unsettled question, there yet remain thirteen letters sent forth by the zealous Apostle of the Gentiles in the space of what can have been little more than a dozen years. When we remember the laborious life of travel and preaching which their author led, and think of the influence which his writings have exercised during eighteen hundred years, we cannot but own the character of these letters to be unique. They are indeed second only to the Gospels in their value to the Christian world. The foundation of the Church is the life of Christ, and the Gospels are of priceless worth, because they have preserved to us some of His very words. Of the constitution of that Church, however, which He left to be built up after His departure, we learn from the Evangelists but little. They tell us of the institution of the two Sacraments, and preserve for us one brief form of common prayer, but for instruction in theology, for words which shall make as plain as is possible what Christian men should believe, of the counsels of God, of the Person of Christ, of the work of Redemption, of the operation of the Holy Spirit, as well as for all lesser matters of early Church order and the government of Chris-

tian society, we must turn to the Epistles, and especially to St. Paul's.

This is as might be expected, for Paul alone of all the Apostles, so far as we know, was a man of much learning and of a liberal education. Probably intended from his youth for some position of influence among his own people, he had been sent, after the earlier training at Tarsus (a city in that day famous as a seat of Gentile learning, the influence of which would penetrate even into Jewish families), to study in Jerusalem under the care of Gamaliel, whose fame was pre-eminent among his contemporaries for a knowledge of all that a Jew deemed precious as education. So Saul grew up thoroughly trained in Jewish learning, and was conspicuous among his fellows for zeal both in study and in religion. But his letters shew us that he was not unacquainted with other literature beside that of his own nation. We can see from them that he was familiar with heathen learning and heathen systems of philosophy; while his use of the Greek of the Septuagint, which he seems to prefer to quote rather than to give any independent rendering of the Hebrew original, proves that the tongue which at that day was the medium of widest intercourse, was perfectly at his command. God had been nurturing him



for his work, and he was in truth what the Divine voice called him, "a chosen vessel."

The story of his early zeal as a persecutor, and of his conversion, is told in the Acts, but we must go to his own letters if we would fully realize the character of the later life and labours of the Apostle. Of an insignificant appearance, and as we should judge of a feeble frame, seemingly needing to have Luke the physician at times in constant attendance, was the man chosen of heaven to carry the Christian glad tidings to the uttermost parts of the world. His sole strength was the encouraging promise, "Be of good cheer, I am with thee." When we try to picture his work for ourselves, we at once perceive how difficult his task must have been. He had to address himself now to Jews, now to Gentiles; for though he claims specially to be sent to the Gentiles, he never neglects nor forgets Israel. To them his message was that the Messiah for whom their nation had waited was already come in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, and had been put to a shameful death by those Jews to whom He first offered His salvation. When he spake to the heathen, Paul's teaching threw discredit upon all which they esteemed religious, declared war against every shrine and every idol, while it enjoined

on them a purity and holiness to which they had hitherto been strangers, and which the natural man does not willingly accept. He described as sin against God many of those indulgences of the body of which they had availed themselves without fear or shame, and which in some cases had been part of what they deemed sacred rites. We can readily comprehend the danger which an unknown Jewish missionary, with such a message, would incur when he came to preach in such places as Philippi, Corinth or Ephesus. And to the perils from his preaching, we must add the fatigue of much travel, the dangerous voyages by sea, and the no less dangerous and unknown roads by land. Nor was this all. The missionary Apostle had severed himself from all home and national ties for Christ's sake. So that he had few to sympathize with him among his own people or his earlier friends; while each new Church that was founded added a new increment to the burden, for the beginner of such a work could never cease to make each brotherhood an object of special care.

We can understand then why Paul was constrained to write as well as to preach. And we cannot doubt that, during the years of his mission travel, and especially when he tarried

for a while in one place, he sent off many brief letters which have perished altogether. We can see that this was the case with the first letter which he wrote to Corinth (1 Cor. v. 11), and we have similar hints of writings now lost, in other parts of the Epistles. The subjects on which he was called to write varied with the varying conditions of each congregation, and the topics developed in character and importance with the growth of Church organization, and with the rise of new difficulties within and without the Churches. This increase of weighty matter in the letters will be seen at once if we compare the first Epistle to the Thessalonians, written before any other that has come down to us, with one of those (*e.g.* the Epistle to the Ephesians) written during St. Paul's first Roman imprisonment. In the former we find a great part of the letter occupied with Christian greetings, and with encouraging reminiscences of past trials which gave hope for the time to come. The Apostle, as always, is full of anxiety about his converts, and exhorts them earnestly against those sins in which, as heathens, some of them had not feared to live. He speaks solemn words about the near approach of the day of Christ, and founds thereon general exhortations both to the presbyters and

to the whole Church, but couches them in language which shews that the Christian body in Thessalonica was as yet without much development of doctrine or Church order. But to the Ephesians he writes on such deep topics as our election and adoption through Christ, how we may become sons of God, of the quickening power of the Spirit, of the relations between faith and works, how both Jew and Gentile are to be made one in Christ, of the way in which he himself had been instructed in this hidden mystery, of the grandeur of the Christian vocation, and of the duty of living in harmony with such a calling; of the unity of the Church as that body of which Christ is the head; after which he deals with the various classes in the Church by way of exhortation, and brings his letter to a close with that noble description of the Christian panoply whereby alone men may hope to resist their spiritual adversaries and to stand strong in the Lord.

The reader of this letter sees at once how much Christianity has advanced, that she has asserted her character and her right to win men in the Master's name, and so is in full conflict with enemies on every side. There are those within who would rend the unity, hence the emphasis that is laid on all that tells of

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Christians as children of one Father, adopted through one Christ, sealed by one baptism, moved by one Holy Spirit, holding fast one pure faith. The enemies without the Church embrace not only those of flesh and blood, but spiritual foes, which bring to the conflict every subtlest weapon of their master Satan.

In view of this advance which is made in the teaching of the Epistles, it is important to read them chronologically, and the order in which they were written is probably as follows.

1. The first Epistle to the Thessalonians, sent from Corinth about A.D. 52.

2. The second Epistle to the Thessalonians written soon after, (probably in the same year and sent from the same place).

3. The first Epistle to the Corinthians, sent from Ephesus in A.D. 57.

4. The second Epistle to the Corinthians, written from some place in Macedonia in the early part of A.D. 58.

5. The Epistle to the Galatians, written from Corinth on St. Paul's arrival there in A.D. 58.

6. The Epistle to the Romans, at the same time and place, but probably after the letter to the Galatians.

|                                   |   |                                                                                                                       |
|-----------------------------------|---|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 7. The Epistle to the Philippians | { | These four are the letters written during the Roman captivity of St. Paul, which lasted two years from A.D. 61 to 63. |
| 8. The Epistle to the Colossians  |   |                                                                                                                       |
| 9. The Epistle to Philemon        |   |                                                                                                                       |
| 10. The Epistle to the Ephesians  |   |                                                                                                                       |

11. The first Epistle to Timothy the place of writing of which is uncertain, but the date was probably about A.D. 65.

12. The Epistle to Titus comes a little later, perhaps A.D. 66, its place of writing also being unknown.

13. The second Epistle to Timothy, sent from Rome during St. Paul's second imprisonment which ended in his martyrdom. This letter cannot be put later than A.D. 67.

From a perusal of the Epistles in this succession we shall clearly see the growth of the Christian Church in its external organization, and also in the definiteness of its doctrinal teaching, while at the same time we shall learn how there also grew up those oppositions with which she had at first to contend, and shall be enabled to judge of the causes to which they were due.

First concerning Church order. To the Thessalonians (1 Thess. v. 12) the Apostle only speaks concerning those who were in after times styled presbyters, or bishops, as "them that labour among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you," and those to whom this superintendence of the Church and power of admonition was committed he addresses as "brethren," a name which at the outset of the letter (i. 4) he has applied to the whole congregation. But after little more than a dozen years have elapsed we find that Timothy, appointed by St. Paul, is holding a definite charge, as chief minister of the Church in Ephesus. The letters addressed to him contain careful directions concerning the form of common prayer which should be used in the Church. Special injunctions, as if the Ephesian Church now numbered many congregations, are given

concerning the character of those who shall be appointed as bishops (*or* overseers) and deacons. There is an arrangement pointed out, by which men should pass from one office to the other, of a nature which could only be contemplated after a period of regular and settled organization. The deacons too are to be subjected to a course of probation, and regard is to be had to their conduct in their own homes as well as in the Church. Moreover we see that by this time regulations existed for the guidance of those women among the Christian body who were ready to devote themselves to works of piety and charity, while the laying on of hands is the recognized manner of appointment to any ministry in Christ's Church. Of the same nature and evidently about the same date are the directions given to Titus for his guidance as chief pastor in Crete. Elders (who, as we can see from Titus i. 5-7, were at this time identical with bishops) were to be ordained in every city, and the Church had waxed strong enough not to allow mere zeal to be a fitting qualification for the office, but to demand that such should be men who were able to exhort in the sound doctrine, and also to convict the gainsayers (Titus i. 9), while her discipline already extended to the rebuke and excom-



munication of heretics (Titus iii. 10). From such notices we can understand something of the labour which must have fallen upon the early Christian missionaries, and most of all upon St. Paul, as he himself confesses (1 Cor. xv. 10). For we may be sure that to other churches in Asia, Achaia and Macedonia, the like directions had to be written, and similar arrangements set on foot in them all, so that when brethren from different congregations came together they might feel in their united devotions that they were indeed members of the same body of Christ, and could worship together in unity. A large share of the oversight of this early organization was embraced in St. Paul's "care of all the Churches," which he tells us (2 Cor. xi. 28) "came upon him daily," and which we may rest sure he did not put aside unheeded.

To the advance of the primitive Church in doctrinal teaching, as seen in these Epistles, allusion has already been made. It will be enough for the purpose of illustration if we dwell more at length on the way in which one single doctrine grew into distinctness by the teaching of God's Spirit through St. Paul and his fellow-workers. The case was similar with each article of the faith. We know that it was

taught by St. Peter in his Pentecostal Sermon, that through Christ a victory had been gained over death. The Lord had risen again, and His resurrection was the earnest of the rising again of His people. "God hath raised up Jesus, having loosed the pangs of death," and this crucified Jesus is made "both Lord and Christ." But with what greater fulness has the teaching been delivered, how much nearer has the conquest over the grave been brought to each Christian, when St. Paul can say to the Corinthians (1 Cor. xv. 53), "This corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality," with all that wondrous illustration of the resurrection teaching which makes the fifteenth chapter of the first Epistle so precious. So too, Christ had said, "I go to prepare a place for you . . . that where I am there ye may be also" (John xiv. 2, 3), but this is illuminated when St. Paul tells how death shall be no more a terror, but shall, because Christ is risen, "be swallowed up in victory." Some years later, writing to the Philippians (i. 21) the Apostle puts the same teaching in another light. He shews them that life and death are both alike God's gift, and so must partake of the same character, *i.e.* be a blessing. "To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." And about the same time to the

Colossians (iii. 3) he goes still further in his teaching that death is no longer a foe but a friend. He treats it, for the Christian, no more as an event to come. They who have died to the world have already begun that heavenly life, which to the saints was to be but a continuance of the earthly, under higher conditions and in another home. "Ye are dead," he says, "and your life is hid with Christ in God." "When Christ, who is our life, shall be manifested, then shall ye also with Him be manifested in glory." In all this there is no more than is contained in the Evangelist's "Where I am, there ye may be also," but we feel as we read the Apostle's words, that the Spirit's work has been abundantly shewn, Christ's promise to His Church fulfilled, and that in the ministry of the great Apostle the Church for generations to come was being guided into all truth.

And just as Christian doctrine becomes more explicit in these successive letters, so do the errors against which the primitive Christians had to contend. When he wrote to the Thessalonians, St. Paul felt called on only to urge on them general purity of life, that they should refrain from all which they knew to be evil in act, and should hold themselves in preparation for the coming of the Lord. But as time goes on

we can trace the opposition of the Judaizers, first as it seems to have shewn itself in the Churches of Achaia, in charges laid against Paul himself, decrying his apostolic authority, and in consequence driving him into that strain of self-assertion which fills the later chapters (x.-xii.) of the second letter to Corinth, but which was so foreign to his natural inclination. Then, in another and later form, the same evil calls forth the severe utterances of the Epistle to the Galatians, followed up by the convincing argumentation of the Epistle to the Romans, a letter which places the Gospel teaching of the equality of all men in God's sight in its true aspect, proclaims fully the universality of the Christian message, and expounds the Apostle's teaching of justification by faith more completely than any other of his writings.

With respect to those other errors which developed into the various forms of Gnosticism, we do not find many special allusions till we come to the later letters of St. Paul. We can see that the philosophic position concerning knowledge, and the freedom which it conferred on its possessors, had been put forward to St. Paul by the Corinthians, whose sympathy with Alexandrine teaching made it most likely that such errors would soon develop among them.

The Apostle is evidently quoting their own words when he says (1 Cor. viii. 1), "We know that we all have knowledge," to which his answer is: "knowledge puffeth up;" and he goes on to instruct them that the duty of those who boast of knowledge is not to go to all lengths which may be allowed, but in their conduct to have regard to the consciences of their weaker brethren. But it is in the Pastoral Epistles that we find this teaching most severely rebuked. In the first letter to Timothy (vi. 4), these boasters of knowledge are spoken of as "proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words," and their teaching is stamped (vi. 20) as "profane babblings, and oppositions of the knowledge which is falsely so called, which some professing have erred concerning the faith." In the second Epistle (ii. 14) we have the like warning against those who "strive about words to no profit, to the subverting of them that hear; and the downward progress of such teachers is described, for their teaching brings forth its fruit in their lives; they are (iii. 8) "corrupted in mind and reprobate concerning the faith."

To Titus he writes in the same strain against "foolish questionings, genealogies, and strifes, and fightings about the law," in some of which

expressions there appears to be an allusion to the Gnostic teaching concerning *Æons*, though the last word, as well as some language in the commencement of the Epistle, proves that the Cretan church was in danger also from Jewish fables and commandments of men who turn away from the truth.

Dealing with subjects of such varied and varying character, and being written as soon as any occasion arose to call them forth, the Epistles of St. Paul cannot be quoted as models of style. They have indeed a power all their own, and shew that they come from a full heart and a strong head. But their very fulness and strength is sometimes a cause of obscurity. The thoughts press upon each other so fast that the expression of them becomes involved, and no small part of the difficulty of St. Paul's writings arises from this cause. In the full tide of an argument a new thought strikes him, and a parenthetical clause, often of no inconsiderable length, is inserted to bring out this side light. As an instance we may cite Rom. ii. 12-16. The Apostle is there addressing himself to Jews, and at first dwells on the judgment of God, whereby to every man there shall be rendered according to his works. He lays down the principle that those heathen who have

sinned against natural conscience only, and have not known the law of Moses, shall have judgment accordingly, and shall not be punished with the rigour that will be awarded to those who go astray under greater light. Then he adds, "as many as have sinned under law shall be judged by law," and at that moment turns off to lay stress on a new point, that "it is not the hearers of a law but the doers thereof who shall be justified." This digression he continues through three whole verses, after which he resumes the first thread again,—those who have a law shall be judged by it, "in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men according to my gospel, by Jesus Christ." Such interruptions of thought make the Epistles in their argumentative portions very difficult to read, and render a reference to the original many a time indispensable.

Again, sometimes the brevity of expression when represented only by a literal translation (as a version meant for public use must ever be) makes the sense difficult to catch. A noteworthy instance of this is found in 2 Cor. xii. 16. The Apostle is declaring that he has neither been, nor will ever be, a burden to the Churches in his ministrations. He seeks not theirs, but them. And he continues, "But be it so : I did



not burden you : nevertheless, being crafty, I caught you with guile." Thus the A.V. ; the Revised Version renders "But be it so, I did not myself burden you, but, being crafty," *etc.* The difficulty of understanding St. Paul's argument here is caused by the impossibility of shewing in a literal translation that the latter portion is meant by him as words which he puts into the mouth of the Corinthians. The force of the sentence, as is shewn by what follows, is this : "I did not myself burden you, that you must all admit. But [perchance you may say] I was crafty and caught you with guile," *i.e.* sent somebody else to make gain of you, though I professed to be myself so disinterested. To this he replies, "Did I take advantage of you by any one of them whom I have sent unto you ? Did Titus take any advantage of you ?" making it clear that he had but supposed them to raise the charge of craftiness that he might answer for his fellow-labourers as well as for himself.

Another abruptness in the Apostle's writings is caused by his manner of quoting what others have said without giving a clear indication of it. Of course those who received his letters in the first instance would understand it, but it is not so easy for us in later times. Thus the first

Epistle to Corinth was written in answer to one which the Christians of Achaia had sent to St. Paul, and from their letter he quotes frequently in his reply. Thus is explained the abruptness in the change of subject between chapters viii. and ix. The former ends with, "I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend." With quite a different tone the next chapter opens, "Am I not an Apostle? Am I not free?" In the Corinthian letter he had been told that some persons had made these assertions,—that he was not a true Apostle, and that he had no divine commission of his own, but was merely a preacher appointed by the Judæan Church, and therefore under their control and not on a parity with the rest of the Twelve. It is this knowledge which causes his indignant interrogations, uttered in the same spirit in which he writes to the Galatians, "Paul an Apostle, not of man, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father."

Another source of difficulty in St. Paul's style is the abundant use which he allows himself to make of *ellipsis*. Often a complete clause must be supplied before the drift of his argument can be seen. His rapid mode of thought took in several steps of the reasoning at a time, and so in his language they are not all expressed.

This may be illustrated by Galatians iii. 9-20. The Apostle has been speaking of the promise made to "Abraham and his seed," which last word he explains to signify Christ, and the use of the singular number, and not the plural, is thus accounted for. Now this covenant, he says, had been dependent on God's promise, but could not take effect till the seed, *i.e.* Christ, was born into the world. In the meantime God gave Israel a law, but St. Paul explains that this was a temporary expedient, and that, in spite of it, the promise still stood firm. He then proceeds with a question which any one might be supposed to ask at once: "What then is the law?" And he answers it: "It was added because of [men's] transgressions till the seed should come to whom the promise had been made: and it was ordained through angels by the hand of a mediator. Now a mediator is not a mediator of one: [*i.e.* there must be two parties where a mediator exists, and the two parties to the law were God and Israel. But where there are such parties there is more danger of any compact being broken, as in fact the law was broken by Israel; therefore it is better to trust in a promise which is made by one, especially if that one be God, than to the law, which man is sure to break], but God is

one, [and so the promise made by Him will not fail]." This is not the only way, by a great many, in which it has been proposed to fill up the steps in the Apostle's argument, but it will serve as an instance of such supplement, and it shews that aid of this kind is needed. It will also be seen from what has been said, that St. Paul's style as well as his subject matter will demand, and repay, abundant labour.

But the greatest influence of this Apostle upon Christian theology is seen when we examine the terms which by his sole use, or because of the greater frequency with which he employs them beyond other writers, have become the accepted terminology of the Christian world. Such are the words for "justify" and "justification," which are found in St. Paul's writings nearly three times as often as in all the rest of the New Testament. Even more strong is the case with "reconcile" and "reconciliation," no single writer but St. Paul employing these words, which have, through his use of them, become technical. Again, in his Epistles only do we find "new man" as contrasted with "old man" and "new creature" in the same sense. He alone (except the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, and whoever he was he was filled full of Pauline thought and diction) employs the

word for "mediator." He it is who has made prominent the contrast between "flesh" and "spirit," between "faith" and "law," and who has supplied those similes in which the Church is compared to a building of which Christ is the chief corner stone, or to a body of which He is the Head, and those other phrases which speak of the "indwelling" of the "Spirit" or of "the word of Christ," expressions which give a colour to the whole language of theology.

His use of special words also deserves attention for another reason. He calls those "saints" whosoever have taken upon them the Christian name; he may almost in the same verse find it necessary to administer to them some admonition or even a rebuke, but yet he includes all who are making a profession of Christian holiness under this one title. The same may be said of his use of such words as "elect," "called" and "the calling," and it is especially to be noticed in his employment of the word "saved," by which he constantly intends nothing more than "in a state of salvation." Thus in 1 Cor. i. 18 he writes, "the preaching of the cross is the power of God unto us *which are saved*," where the Revised Version renders "which are being saved," *i.e.* have been brought thereby into a state of salvation. So in 2 Tim. i. 9, "who

hath *saved* us and called us with a holy calling," has the same sense ; and again Titus iii. 5, "according to His mercy He *saved* us by the washing of regeneration," which means He placed us on the way to salvation.

As objections have been raised in modern times to the genuineness of some of St. Paul's Epistles, it is needful to notice the subject briefly here. Against four of them not even the most destructive critics have ventured to raise a voice ; these are the two Epistles to the Corinthians, that to the Galatians, and that to the Romans. And it is most important to dwell on this concession ; for we have in the four letters which all acknowledge, a standard whereby, the objectors themselves being judges, we may determine what is Pauline and what is not. And the unbiassed use of this standard alone will more frequently lead to the acceptance than to the rejection of the other writings which bear St. Paul's name.

It is best in any such enquiry to take the Epistles in the chronological order which has already been specified, for thus we shall follow the true development of the Apostle's teaching, and better judge of the genuineness of the writings at each successive stage. Against the Epistles to the Thessalonians it has been urged

that the words (2 Thess. iii. 17), where the apostolic autograph is said to be the token of genuineness in every letter, cast doubt upon the first Epistle, which has no such autograph. But we have only to remember that there had just been sent to Thessalonica a letter purporting to be St. Paul's, but which was not his, to see that this precaution is probably adopted by the Apostle now for the first time, as no necessity for it had been found before, and that therefore such an objection is made without ground.

Next, it said that much of the first Epistle is but a recital of matters gleaned from the Acts of the Apostles, which could have been put into their present form by any other person. To see that this is not so, we have only to look at iii. 1, where the Apostle speaks thus: "When we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left behind at Athens alone, and sent Timothy our brother . . . to comfort you." There is no mention of this course of action in St. Luke's narrative, but yet what is told in the Epistle is exactly what would fit in with the details of the history, and so the two documents are corroborative of each other. Then some passages are quoted by the objectors which bear a resemblance to portions of St.



Paul's later writings, notably to the Corinthian Epistles. But is it not in the highest degree probable that a writer, sending letters to different Churches, letters which all deal with the truths of one system of teaching, would employ expressions in one which could be paralleled from the rest? It is said again that the language of 1 Thess. ii. 14-16 is not like any other portion of St. Paul's Epistles. He there speaks to the Thessalonians of the likeness of their own sufferings to those which the Christians in Judæa had undergone from the Jews. But, say the objectors, he has nowhere else pointed to the Christians of Judæa as an example for Christians in other places, he has nowhere joined a mention of his own sufferings with a notice of the crucifixion of Jesus, he has nowhere else spoken of the Jews as being "contrary to all men," while the expression "the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost" is explained to mean nothing else but that Jerusalem had been already destroyed, and if so the Epistle cannot be St. Paul's.

Such criticism, it is manifest, would lay down a rule, that an author having used one set of ideas and forms of expression cannot vary from them in any degree. There is no word in the allusions of the letter that is not borne out by

history, so far as we know it, and why should not St. Paul compare the troubles of the Thesalonians to those of which he himself had been partaker along with other Christians in the Holy Land? And though he does not use the phrase "contrary to all men" of the Judaizers again, he has language in abundance of the same purport, as where he speaks of their "zealous seeking of adherents in no good way" (Gal. v. 17), and asks whether his own telling of the truth has made him the "enemy" of the Galatians, calls the doctrines of these men a "yoke of bondage," and declares that all their desire is "to make a fair show in the flesh." These are all from one Epistle, but there are many other places from which we could gather testimony how Paul felt that his preaching made him the enemy of these formalists, and that their desire to exclude all men from the privileges of salvation, who did not conform to the ceremonial law, justified his declaration that they were foes to all men beside. Of the interpretation pressed upon 1 Thess. ii. 16, "the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost," it is not needful to say much. If Jerusalem had already been in ruins, we should have had words much more definite in character than these. We know how before the

final overthrow, troubles and afflictions fell oft on the doomed country. Of these St. Paul knew. Some of them had happened just before he wrote. He no doubt thought of these, but he intends much more; "the wrath is falling upon them and will continue to fall, there will be no end thereof," as long as they oppose themselves in the way they are doing to the spread of God's revelation of Himself to all men. He does not allude to any time, but sees with prophetic eye that such opposition can never have any issue but "the wrath" of which he had already spoken in i. 10.

Against the first Epistle it is also urged that it represents a condition of things which is scarcely consistent with the date assigned for its composition. St. Paul had only lately left Thessalonica to come to Athens and Corinth, yet he writes (i. 7) "Ye became examples to all that believe, in Macedonia and Achaia." But surely this is no more than to say that the Thessalonians were eminent among the Christian congregations of Europe. And we know from 2 Cor. viii. 1 that St. Paul did speak in his letters to one Church about the "grace of God given in the churches of Macedonia," and we need not doubt that he did the same in his addresses to other congregations.

Further, the teaching about the coming of Christ, and about the signs which shall precede the day of the Lord, is said to be unlike that in St. Paul's other Epistles. There is no doubt that the language of the early Christians underwent a change on this subject. When Christ had just been taken from them, and an assurance given by the angels that He should come again, it was but natural that their first desires and thoughts should be centred on this return, and that it should on that account have greater prominence in the earlier Epistles. When St. Paul found that among the Thessalonians this expectation was working harm, he sent his second letter as a corrective. But he did not put aside, nor does he teach that others should put aside, a constant readiness and looking for that day lest it come unawares. To the Romans he writes, "the day is at hand." He tells the Corinthians, "ye also are ours in the day of the Lord Jesus," and uses "*Maran atha*" = "the Lord cometh," as his motto or watchword to them. To the Philippians he speaks of his own "glorying in the day of Christ." To Timothy he writes concerning the "crown of righteousness which shall be given by the Lord at that day to them that have loved His appearing." The last sentence shews the attitude

towards this subject which the early Christian teachers desired to foster—a longing desire, a love for the appearance of the Lord. This the Churches were taught was ever to be maintained, and to us still the Apostles would give the same lesson, “the Lord is at hand.”

The objections against these two Epistles have been noticed at greater length, because they may be taken as a specimen of those critical difficulties which minute scepticism in modern times has raised over some of the other letters. Thus it has been propounded that the Epistle to the Philippians is made up of two documents, one written to the Church, the other to private friends, and that the portion of it from iii. 1 to iv. 9 is an interpolation of the editor, who thus joined the beginning and the end together. The letters to Colossæ and Ephesus have been criticized as containing expressions borrowed from the heretical systems of the second century, and the Epistle to Philemon is so closely joined with that to Colossæ that those who have ascribed a late date to the one are obliged, though they have a difficulty in assigning any good reason for their judgment, to deal out the same measure to this natural and most beautiful letter.

The Pastoral Epistles stand on a somewhat

different footing from the rest of St. Paul's letters, because it is almost certain that they were written after the termination of his first imprisonment, and so we have no historical work with which we can compare them, or from which we may be guided to a judgment of the times and circumstances under which they were written. Of this absence of any parallel history the most has been made by those critics who yet employ the other Epistles of St. Paul to shew that the history contained in the Acts of the Apostles is utterly untrustworthy. But they have also objected that the character of the teachers opposed to Christianity, as they are represented in the Pastoral letters, differs from what we find concerning them in the other Epistles. With this remark every one will probably agree, though not with the conclusions that are drawn from it against the genuineness of the letters themselves. It ought first to be taken into account that these Pastoral letters are not written to whole congregations, but to the presiding ministers of important Churches. This of itself would, perhaps, account for a difference in the way in which erroneous teaching is spoken of. But when this difference is examined it appears no more than what was natural in the time and under the circumstances.

First, there were the Jewish opponents. These in the Pastoral letters are no longer mere supporters of the ceremonial law, wishing to make its acceptance the only door to Christianity. St. Paul's years of labour had made such a position impossible. Ceremonial Judaism could not now be joined on to a profession of faith in Christ, and thus the severance between Jews and Christians had grown wider, as was natural. The Apostle here speaks of them as having "swerved aside from love which is the end of the charge," and says that though "desiring to be teachers of the law, they understand not what they say" (1 Tim. i. 5-7). "They hold a form of godliness, but have denied the power thereof:" "as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these men withstand the truth, being men corrupted in mind, reprobate concerning the faith" (1 Tim. iii. 5-8). They of the circumcision are described as specially "unruly, vain talkers and deceivers; subverters of houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake, professing that they know God, but by their works denying Him, being abominable and disobedient and to every good work reprobate" (Tit. i. 10-16).

With reference to the traces of allusions to Gnostic heresy which have been found in the



Pastoral Epistles, we must allow that the germs of Gnosticism were to be discovered very early, as we may learn from the history of Cerinthus in St. John's day. But that which is called a condemnation of Gnosticism in these letters, is directed against a very different kind of teaching from that which was current in 'the second century, to which date the critics would relegate the Epistles to Timothy and Titus. The marks of Gnosticism throughout all these letters connect it closely with Judaism. The propounders of 'fables and endless genealogies' are put side by side with those who 'desire to be teachers of the law though they understand it not.' With the warning against 'profane and old wives' fables' is coupled the condemnation of Ebionite asceticism, 'forbidding to marry and commanding to abstain from meats.' And the way in which 'the oppositions of the knowledge which is falsely so called' is mentioned indicates that it was some teaching by which Jewish Christians were in danger to be led away. And this is the same in the Epistle to Titus; the 'foolish questionings and genealogies' are in close conjunction with 'strifes and fighting about the law.' But the Gnosticism of the second century had severed itself from everything Jewish. The God of the Jews, the Jewish laws and teaching were all rejected when the Jewish temple ser-

vices had come to an end at the overthrow of Jerusalem; and thus this later Gnostic system is utterly different from what we find in the New Testament, where all allusions to the early forms of this teaching bear the same features as we see in the Pastoral letters.

It is further objected that these Epistles exhibit a more advanced stage of ecclesiastical order than is compatible with their early date. This objection needs but little refutation. The order of deacons existed from very early times, and presbyters were an inheritance from the Jewish system, and beyond these two no orders of the ministry are mentioned. For we can see from St. Paul's speech to the Ephesian elders at Miletus (Acts xx.) that presbyter and bishop were at first the names of the same office. And this is confirmed by the words of Titus i. 5-7. The Apostle writes: "Appoint *elders* in every city; if any man is blameless . . . for a *bishop* must be blameless." And all the rules which are laid down for the choice and conduct of both deacons and presbyters are of the simplest nature; directions for holy life and exemplary conversation, but having nothing in them that savours of hierarchical pretension or an elaborate ecclesiastic system; while the order of widows, which is made part of the ground of this objection, was of very early existence in the

Church, and we can see that it is contemplated in the language of Acts ix. 39, and in the whole context of that passage.

It will be seen then that most of the objections to which allusion has been made are those of men who come to the task of criticism with their own standard of what should be, and condemn whatever differs therefrom. They ignore the immense amount of external evidence from the early Patristic writings, and the long acceptance of these letters by the Church, while they elevate into authorities writings which have not a tithe of the warrant which belongs to the Canonical Scriptures and the works of the earlier Fathers. But such criticism is utterly futile. It professes to desire in these writings certain features, which, if they did exist, would be strong evidence that the Christian books were not genuine. Nor do the critics agree together. What to one is a sign of authenticity, another points to as a mark of spuriousness. Thus their cavils have produced small effect on settled Christian minds. Most men acknowledge the natural and homogeneous character of this whole series of letters, and choose rather to follow the consent of early Christendom than the erratic speculations of those to whom it seems a light thing to shake the foundations of faith.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE PAULINE EPISTLES.

#### (i. ii.) THE EPISTLES TO THE THESSALONIANS.

NONE of the letters of St. Paul which have come down to us are addressed to any of the Churches founded by himself and Barnabas in their first missionary journey, nor, with the exception of a passing visit to Lystra and its neighbourhood, does the Apostle appear to have gone again over those parts of Asia Minor. Perhaps he left that field of labour for Barnabas, and himself went to break up new ground. His second journey extended into Europe, where, having passed through Philippi, Thessalonica, Berœa, and Athens, he came at length to Corinth, and from thence wrote the Epistles that are earliest in date of those which have been preserved to us.

It must have been about A.D. 52 that this European journey was made, and we know from the Acts (xvi.-xviii.) what a time of suffering and peril it was. Among the fellow-labourers

of St. Paul, Timothy and Silas are expressly named by St. Luke, the latter as sharing with Paul the scourging and the prison at Philippi. When set at liberty, passing through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they reached Thessalonica, and there the Apostle remained long enough to receive aid on two occasions from the little flock which he had gathered together at Philippi (Phil. iv. 16). At Berœa, the two companions were left behind, and Paul came on to Athens without them. He sent word back, however, by those who had escorted him thus far, for his fellow-helpers to come and join him. St. Luke's narrative only relates how Silas and Timothy came to the Apostle in Corinth, but we know from the first Epistle to the Thessalonians (iii. 1) which is the earliest in date of St. Paul's letters which remain, that Timothy at least joined him in Athens, and was sent back again with a message of comfort for the Thessalonian Church. After this he must soon have returned, for he was with the Apostle when the first letter to Thessalonica was written, and this was most probably in the early days of that sojourn in Corinth of which we read in Acts xviii. 1-17. For it is a characteristic of all St. Paul's Epistles, that they appear to have been written (or rather dictated) as soon as the occa-

sion for their writing arose. They are able compositions for argument and matter, but they are not models of style. The writing is not studied, but comes forth just as the crowding thoughts press thick on one another. They are out-pourings from the depth of a fervid heart in immediate response to any call for advice or warning or rebuke.

From the language of the first Epistle to the Thessalonians we can gather that the Apostle was very anxious about the state of the newly founded Church, lest under persecution and temptation they should fall away from the faith when he was no longer near to strengthen them by words and example. He cannot have been long in Athens before he sent off Timothy to go back to them and establish and comfort the congregation. And now that his messenger has come again to him, the news he brings forces him to write, partly because he is rejoiced at what he hears, partly because he has a word of admonition to give. For he cannot, amid his troubles at Corinth, spare his young companion for another journey. Hence the letter which has been preserved to us.

Joining with himself in the greeting his fellow-labourers (well known in Thessalonica), Timothy and Silvanus (*i.e.* Silas), he addresses

the Thessalonian Church with a salutation of grace and peace. Then after a thanksgiving for all that he has known of their faith and hope and love, he proceeds, in a short historical notice of those labours of his by which they had profited, to remind them of the character of that preaching which had won them to be imitators of him and of Christ. They had received the word in much affliction, but their life had been such as to make them a pattern far and wide. Men recognized the change which had been wrought in the Thessalonians, and spake of it as the work of Paul's preaching, that they had turned from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven.

In the second chapter, however, we can discern that some murmurings had been raised against the Apostle, though we are not told from what quarter they had come.<sup>1</sup> He needs to protest and to remind the converts that his exhortation unto them had not been of error,

<sup>1</sup> We may judge, however, from the character of the charges made, and a comparison with the Epistle to the Galatians, where, as here, Paul appears to have been called a man-pleaser (Gal. i. 10 with 1 Thess. ii. 4, 5) that the persons who made them were the Jews of Thessalonica.



nor of uncleanness, nor in guile; that he had neither shewn covetousness nor used flattery towards them, but had worked with his own hands, walking holily and unblameably in their midst. And he puts them in mind that they had accepted his message as the word of God,<sup>1</sup> and had testified to the soundness of their faith by their readiness to suffer. And then, just for a moment, we appear to realize that the Apostle, as he writes, is in the midst of that persecution of the Jews which befell him while he was in Corinth (Acts xviii.); for, speaking of his treatment by his own countrymen, his language waxes severe: "They drave us out," he says, "and they please not God, and are contrary to all men, forbidding us to speak unto the Gentiles, that they may be saved." Then he proceeds to explain how earnest had been his desire to come back to Thessalonica, but that had been impossible. Satan, with St. Paul a very real adversary, had hindered. So, to satisfy his heart's longing, he had sent Timothy<sup>2</sup> from

<sup>1</sup> It is better to refer the relative in ii. 13, "*which* effectually worketh," to *God*, rather than to the *word*. The verb is the same as in 1 Cor. xii. 6, "God which worketh all in all;" and Phil. ii. 13, "God which worketh in you both to will and to do."

<sup>2</sup> In iii. 2, according to the best texts, Timothy is called "God's minister in the Gospel of Christ," or in

Athens, and that they might have some comfort in their trials, trials which he had foretold to them. The report which has been brought to him is in the main consolatory; and so, repeating his expression of longing after them, and with a prayer that his desire may be gratified, and also that they may increase and abound in love, the Apostle concludes this which may be called the personal and historical section of his letter.

The next part of the Epistle is occupied with exhortations that they should live according to his teaching, and specially shun those sins of the flesh<sup>1</sup> which in the Gentile world were so grossly indulged; that their love of the brethren, of which they had already given such

some MSS. "fellow-worker with God." The former of these is most probably the original text. The unusual expression has led to explanations on the margin, and one of these has been taken into the Received Text, and is represented by the A. V.

<sup>1</sup> "Vessel" in iv. 4 refers to the body, which may be looked upon as that which contains the real man, the soul; "to possess" signifies "to make himself master of," "to get the mastery over," "to have command over." In verse 6 the Revised Version is correct in rendering "in the matter," instead of "in any matter." The exhortation is not against transgression and wrong in general, but against such transgression and wrong as men do to one another "in the matter" of sins of the flesh.

abundant proof, might still increase, and that they should lead peaceable lives, and labour to live honestly.

Then follows a section which seems to have moved the Thessalonian Church more than the Apostle had intended. It would appear that some questions had been raised among them concerning the state of the dead and the near approach of the day of the Lord. To quiet such questionings, St. Paul writes (and he speaks in solemn tones, uttering his remarks as "by the word of the Lord"), that those who are dead shall share in the resurrection equally with those who may be alive when the Lord comes. And he adds, "We that are alive, that are left unto the coming of the Lord, shall in no wise precede them that are fallen asleep;" and afterwards, "We that are alive, that are left, shall, together with them, be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air." St. Paul's words, though they may be held to refer only to those who shall be alive whenever the last day arrives, are framed in the first person, as though they were intended to apply to himself and them, and they produced in the minds of the Thessalonians an impression that this solemn language uttered "by the word of the Lord," meant that Christ would come again in

the lifetime of the Apostle and of those to whom he wrote. Of the consequence of this impression we shall speak afterwards.

The letter continues in a strain of exhortation suitable to what has gone before. The coming of the day of the Lord will be as a thief in the night, but those who are children of the light should not be unprepared for it. That this may be the condition of the Thessalonians, the Apostle urges on them to live soberly, to take for their armour of defence faith and love and the hope of salvation, and to continue to comfort and build up each other with the thought that God's design was that they should live together with Christ. Then in brief sentences he impresses on the Church the duty of esteeming those who labour among them in the work of the Lord, and of following peace one with another. He next turns to speak expressly to these labourers, the presbyters. He bids them warn, comfort, strengthen, wherever it is needful so to do, and bear with those that are weak, seeking constantly the good of all men. Christian joy, constant prayer and thanksgiving, should mark lives led according to God's will. Let them not quench the work of God's Spirit, nor think lightly of prophesying,<sup>1</sup> but try every-

<sup>1</sup> By "prophesying" St. Paul means *preaching*. This

thing which the prophets uttered, holding fast the good, and keeping from every form<sup>1</sup> of evil. He then commends them to God, entreating at the same time their prayers for himself, and sending a general greeting and a solemn charge that his letter should be read for the edification of the whole Church.

The Apostle remained in Corinth for a year and six months (Acts xviii. 11), and at some time during that period he received another report of the state of the Church in Thessalonica, and in consequence wrote the second Epistle to the Thessalonians. We cannot tell how long it was after the first was written, nor in what way the news came to St. Paul, but he

gift was looked upon in earlier Christian times, by those who regarded display more than instruction, as among the humbler powers imparted by the Spirit. We can see from the first Epistle to the Corinthians (xiv.) that "to speak with tongues" was more coveted, and held to be a greater sign of supernatural endowment. Perhaps St. Paul saw something of the same feeling arising in Thessalonica, and wished to check it at the outset.

<sup>1</sup> The rendering of the A. V., "from all appearance of evil," has been the cause of misunderstanding. The Apostle is not urging, as some have thought, that for the sake of others the Thessalonians should keep from all that may have to any one an appearance of evil. He has just said, "Hold fast what is good," and the antithesis follows, "Keep from every sort of evil."

found that his language concerning the coming of Christ had been taken otherwise than it was intended. The Thessalonians, though none the less earnestly attached to the faith, were yet completely possessed with the thought that Christ would immediately appear, and this thought paralysed them for their daily duties. It seems too (2 Thess. ii. 2), by the Apostle's language about "an epistle as from us," that some other person had written to them on this subject, giving what purported to be St. Paul's teaching thereon, and this letter had increased<sup>1</sup> their unwillingness to trouble themselves about even their necessary and lawful duties, seeing that the scene on which those duties were to be performed was so soon to pass away. The letter to which St. Paul's allusion is made may have been sent to Thessalonica in perfect good faith. The Apostle does not speak of it as though it deserved his condemnation. Those who wrote it may, as the Thessalonians were now doing, have put too precise a meaning upon words which they had heard the Apostle employ. Christ was no sooner taken up into heaven, than

<sup>1</sup> That there had been shewn before by the Thessalonians some tendency to remissness in the ordinary duties of life, may be seen from the exhortations in 1 Thess. iv. 11.

the angels spoke of His coming again, and the thought of this was at first, and for a long time, uppermost in the minds of the early disciples. But the expressions of the New Testament writers underwent a change on this subject of the nearness of the Lord's return. We shall find that St. Paul, taught perhaps by the mistaken acceptance of his first letter to Thessalonica, speaks nowhere afterwards in terms which present the same facility for misconception as here.

Timothy and Silas are still with St. Paul when he writes his second letter, and are included in its words of greeting, as in the first Epistle. Then follows the outpouring of the writer's thankfulness that faith and love were growing stronger among the Thessalonian converts. The Apostle glories over this ; for while they are involved in persecutions and affliction, the manner in which they bear their troubles proves that they are being made worthy of the kingdom of God. And God will requite the persecutors with affliction, but the sufferers with joy, in the day of the manifestation of Jesus Christ, for the coming of which time, when the glory of the Lord shall be made manifest in His people, the Apostle is constant in his prayer.

After this introduction he turns to notice



the panic which had been caused among the Thessalonians by his previous letter, and by that other which purported to represent his opinions. He entreats them not to be disturbed as they had allowed themselves to be. The day of Christ may be very near, but there will be signs that shall mark its coming. And one of these, which will surely be recognized, he speaks of in language which is not plain to us, but which his previous teaching had made intelligible to those for whom he wrote. He tells them that before the day of Christ there will occur "*the falling away*," that apostasy which should cast all others into the shade, and that in it "the man of sin will be revealed, the son of perdition, who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God." Of this he had spoken while he was with them, and had told them also that there was a restraining person or power (for he uses both the masculine and neuter gender in defining it); and so long as that lasted, the lawless one would not be revealed; though the mystery of lawlessness, of which the lawless one would be the culminating development, was already working. Afterwards he should be made manifest, and then should follow the appearance of Jesus, by the breath of whose mouth the son of perdition should be

slain, and destroyed by the manifestation of His coming. Other marks of this son of perdition are that his coming is according to the working of Satan, marked by power, and signs, and lying wonders. Those who go after him have rejected the love of the truth, and for this God gives them over to believe a lie, that they may come into judgment because they have had pleasure in unrighteousness.

To much that is mysterious in this language the Thessalonians had some key. They knew to what St. Paul was alluding when he spake of "the restraining power"; they had an idea of what was prefigured under the designation "the man of sin." From the "bated breath" in which all this is spoken of, it seems most likely that the Roman empire was in the Apostle's mind, and of this power his countrymen had learnt to speak by figures rather than openly. In "the man of sin" he perhaps foresaw some future Roman emperor,<sup>1</sup> whose wicked career

<sup>1</sup> Of St. Paul's words in this very difficult passage we must think exactly as we are constrained to think of the Old Testament prophecies and prophets. The word of the Lord is here with St. Paul, as it was in old times with Isaiah or Ezekiel. God is revealing the future through him, and no doubt St. Paul, in his own mind as well as in his language at Thessalonica, had put some interpretation upon what was revealed. That he did not see to the end

the times would foster, till the corruption had burst all bounds and spread on every side, so that some manifestation of Christ would be called for to clear the world of a part of its abominations. Be this as it may, we may feel convinced that St. Paul himself expected such a manifestation at no very distant future. He gives some signs of the coming times, that his converts may no longer be dismayed, but he does not change his words. The day of the Lord is at hand is still his lesson. But of that Lord the Thessalonians are beloved. He has chosen them unto salvation. For this the Apostle thanks God; and that they may be able to stand fast, and hold firm the truth which they have learnt, he invokes for them the aid of Christ and God the Father.

Next he entreats their prayers for himself. He is among unreasonable and wicked men.

of the ages, and that the coming of Christ, to which his explanation pointed, has not exhausted God's revelation, is but a proof that he was only a man who "spake from God, being moved by the Holy Ghost," and that, like other prophets, he was left to "search what time or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ, which was in him, did point unto." The immediate and partial fulfilments which have been dwelt on by expositors may have been true in their day and degree, but the end is not yet. The mystery of lawlessness has not attained, though it be steadily approaching, its fullest manifestation.

Well might he use such words of the Jews in Corinth! How different their spirit from that of the Thessalonians, who will do, and are doing (he is sure), everything that he has commanded. His immediate command is that they withdraw themselves from all that live disorderly lives, and not after his teaching. He had laboured with his own hands, that he might be no burden to them. Let them take care that all with whom they have to do act in like manner. These duties are not to be neglected by men who look for the coming of the Lord. If any will not work, let him not eat. For yourselves, he adds, be not weary of the fair lives you have tried to lead, but avoid and admonish them that obey not what I have here written.

With the blessing he then adds his autograph salutation. Thus shall they know the letter to be his own. He may have been in the habit of doing this before, but under the circumstances it seems more reasonable to take the words, "This is the token in every epistle," to refer to what will be his custom in the future. Letters had been circulated as from him. Henceforth his own signature should mark each letter which he sent.

(iii.) THE FIRST EPISTLE TO THE  
CORINTHIANS.

AFTER sending the second Epistle to Thessalonica, St. Paul continued in Corinth, for we read (Acts xviii. 18), that after the trial before Gallio, "he tarried there yet a good while." Then embarking from Cenchreæ, he came by sea to Jerusalem, touching on the way at Ephesus, where he left Aquila and Priscilla, and then went on from Jerusalem to Antioch. After a journey through parts of Asia Minor he came again to Ephesus, and found that since his previous visit, a learned Jew of Alexandria named Apollos, had been staying in that city. This man, having been found by St. Paul's friends, Aquila and his wife, and by them further instructed in the doctrines of Christ, had been sent over to Corinth with letters of commendation, and had there proved a mighty preacher of the Christian faith. When St. Paul reached Ephesus, Apollos was still in Corinth; but during the stay of the Apostle in the Asiatic metropolis he came over and met him, for the voyage from Corinth to Ephesus was one of no great difficulty. There has been some controversy whether St. Paul, during his residence

of from two to three years in Ephesus, did not himself pass the sea for a hasty visit to Corinth. Between writing the first and second Epistle to the Corinthians he did not visit that Church; yet he says (2 Cor. xii. 14), "Behold the *third* time I am ready to come unto you;" and again (xiii. 1), "This is the *third* time I am coming to you." But these passages and all their context, as well as the mention which he makes (2 Cor. ii. 1; xii. 21) of his coming to Corinth again, are not inconsistent with the supposition of a visit intended and announced, but from some cause never paid. And the text of 2 Cor. xiii. 2, "as when I was present the second time," is too small a foundation to have raised upon it the confident assertion of a journey about which St. Luke has no mention; for the Revised Version shews that the words may fairly be rendered, "as if I were present the second time." It seems, therefore, to involve less assumption, if we deem the journey, to which allusion is here made, to have been proposed, but never accomplished.

But if St. Paul had not visited Corinth during his stay in Ephesus, he had certainly written to that Church (1 Cor. v. 9), and one of his exhortations, to which he makes allusion in the first Epistle which we have received, had been

against those sins of the flesh to which the Gentiles were so prone. This letter may have been only a brief word of warning from one who knew the dangers to which the Corinthians were specially exposed. But since it had been sent, there had come to him a letter from Corinth, brought (1 Cor. xvi. 17) by Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus, warm friends of St. Paul, as their conduct on their arrival at Ephesus shewed. These men are probably the same<sup>1</sup> with "those of the house of Chloe" (1 Cor. i. 11), of whom the Apostle speaks at the beginning of his Epistle. It is clear that they had come to St. Paul about some difficulties which had arisen in the Corinthian congregation, and which concerned the questions of the comparative merit of marriage and celibacy; of the way in which they were to deal with meats which they might suspect or know to have been offered to idols; on some points connected with the regulations of dress in their religious meetings, and with the relative importance of those spiritual gifts which God had bestowed on some of their number; and lastly, concerning the solemn question of the

<sup>1</sup> They may have been different persons, but it seems easier to suppose one party of visitors from Corinth to the Apostle than two.



doctrine of the resurrection, which some among them had begun to deny.

These inquiries showed a great falling away from the spiritual condition in which the Apostle had left them. But in conversation with their messengers St. Paul learnt much more, and of a darker character. They told him of divisions in the Church; how some called themselves by his own name, some by the name of Apollos, while another portion, the Judaizing section, identified themselves with Peter, whom their Jewish tastes made them prefer to call Cephas; while others, also Judaizers, ranged themselves, it may be, under the leadership of one of the brethren of the Lord, and called themselves by the name of Christ, as though they, and they only, had a right to this high title. Besides this, the eloquence of Apollos had prove attractive to Greek ears, and had been compared with the more simple oratory of St. Paul, and the latter had suffered by the comparison. We know that such a result would be deplored by Apollos. To his true zeal for Christ's cause St. Paul bears full testimony. We see from 1 Cor. xvi. 12, that Apollos would be no fosterer of party wrangling. Some of the Corinthians were begging that he would come again to them, for he was now

with Paul in Ephesus, but it was not at all his will to come then. The circumstances were not convenient, and till they were so he would labour elsewhere. Another cause for grief was a case of incest among the Christian congregation, of such a character as even heathens would not tolerate ; for one of their number was living as the husband of his stepmother, and that during his father's lifetime. Paul learnt, moreover, that there had arisen a spirit of litigation among the brethren, and that their lawsuits before the heathen magistrates were bringing the Christian body into discredit ; nor were they careful to observe that purity and moral restraint in their lives to which he had exhorted them in that previous letter to which he alludes.

These more serious faults had, as it seems, found no mention in the letter brought from Corinth. They were only learnt from the conversation of the messengers. And the Corinthians appeared to have been little moved by such wrong-doing in their midst. For over the very grossest of these offences they exhibited no sense of sorrow. "Ye are puffed up," he writes (v. 2), "and have not mourned."

Such were the circumstances under which St. Paul began our first Epistle to the Corinthians. And we cannot but admire the tone in which,

with such a knowledge of their condition, he addresses the congregation among whom there was so much to blame. He couples with himself in the salutation, Sosthenes, who may have been that chief ruler of the Corinthian synagogue spoken of in Acts xviii. 17, and if so, would be as anxious as St. Paul himself for the spiritual advancement of his fellow-citizens. The Apostle first reminds the Corinthians of their calling, and expresses his own thankfulness to God for the rich gifts<sup>1</sup> which had been bestowed upon them. He tells them, too, that the Giver of all these was ever faithful, and has called them into the fellowship of Jesus Christ.

He then turns first to those matters of which their letter seems not to have spoken. "I hear," "he writes, that there are contentions among you. Some, attracted by the eloquent preaching of Apollos, have set up his name as the mark of a party, while others do the same with my own. Then those among you who have a leaning to Judaism have selected, some Cephas, some another leader, and will be known by party names. All this is contrary to what you have

<sup>1</sup> That spiritual gifts were bestowed on other Churches we can see from what is said of the "prophesyings" in 1 Thess. v. 20, but there is nowhere such special mention made of them as in the letters to Corinth.

been taught. Christ alone has been set before you as your Master. Into His name ye were baptized, by His death ye are redeemed. The eloquence which has captivated some of you forms no necessary part of the Gospel message, that is the simple story of Christ crucified, and asks no adornment from man's language, no subtle arguments to commend it.<sup>1</sup> It is the power of God and the wisdom of God, and must be accepted both by Jew and Greek in its simplicity, not because of signs, not for the sake of human wisdom, if it is to become mighty unto salvation.

"I therefore came not unto you with eloquent speech or philosophic learning, but with the message of the cross, uttered with much fear and trembling, from a sense of my own weakness. Yet to those who receive our message<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect" (i. 17). This is literally, "should be emptied." There was a trial in accepting the gospel of the crucifixion, but those who received it must bear the trial, and it was not to be deprived of its character by the commendations of eloquent speech.

<sup>2</sup> "We speak wisdom among the perfect" (ii. 6). St. Paul calls them "perfect" here who have appreciated the doctrine of the Cross. They know how great is the wisdom of that teaching. To them, as to persons initiated, the wisdom is made plain, though by the world it is counted of foolishness. Therefore (ii. 7) the Apostle

it is a wisdom beyond all that the world has known, but it speaks to the spirit, and must be spiritually discerned. This is the wisdom which we have received and have laboured to impart unto you, having the mind of Christ within us, and thereby being raised above mere natural judgment.

“And unto you I spake as unto babes in Christ, and the divisions of which I hear prove that I was right in so doing. But whoever your teachers be, they are but planters and waterers of God’s seed: from him must the increase come. But planters and waterers are all one band together. They are all fellow-labourers with God, and cannot be made parties to any division of the Christian unity. You are, to use another simile, a temple raised to God, of which we are merely the builders, each doing his little. I laid the foundation, those who followed me carried on the work. Soon each man’s work shall be tested. Look not at the workers, but think of the trial day. It is vain to glory in men; they, like yourselves, belong to Christ and to God, unto whom they must give account. Away then with these party jealousies.

calls his message “God’s wisdom in a mystery.” Only those to whom deeper insight has been given can know its power.

Fix your thoughts on the coming of the Lord ; then shall the hidden things be brought to light, and each man's work have its<sup>1</sup> praise of God.

"I have used words," he continues, "which refer to Apollos and myself, and to our work among you, that I might the more clearly warn you against this pride which genders division. Such lessons never came from him nor from me. This is not our example. You are glorying as though the gifts you have received were all your own. You feel rich, and proud, and lordly as kings. How different is our lot ! for I think that God hath set forth us the Apostles last of all, as men doomed to death.<sup>2</sup> We suffer both in body and mind, we toil and endure persecution, and are become as the refuse of the world, as the offscouring of all things. This is not meant to shame, but to admonish you ; and I have the right to say such words. You may have others for guardians and guides, but I am your father in Christ, and no other can take that place. Follow my example. Timothy,

<sup>1</sup> The Original gives "*the* praise," *i.e.* the praise which is its due. The A. V. misses this.

<sup>2</sup> The allusion is to those criminals who were brought out at the close of an entertainment in the amphitheatre, and forced to fight with wild beasts, or with one another, till they were slain.

whom I have sent unto you, will keep you in mind to do so. And do not think because I send him that I will not come myself. By God's will I shall soon see you again. Tell me, my children, shall I have to come with the rod to punish, or with words of love to aid and comfort you?

"And there is sore need for me to be present. I hear that some have gone beyond the Gentiles in the sins of the flesh. One among you is living with his father's wife, and ye have taken no steps to put an end to this sin. In the name of Christ I charge you, banish such a man from your congregation. He has chosen Satan for his master. Give him over to the service of his choice. Let him learn by what you do the vileness and hardness of his slavery; haply he may thereby be induced to seek freedom in Christ. This is not a matter about which to glory, as ye are doing. The sin will spread, if it be not checked. Purge out then this evil leaven, keep a passover feast in spirit,<sup>1</sup> by clear-

<sup>1</sup> "As ye are unleavened" (v. 7). These words are difficult to understand, unless we suppose that the Jewish members of the Christian congregation still observed, and were at this time observing, the feast of unleavened bread. In that case the expression might signify "as ye are now keeping the feast from which leaven is excluded, so purge out the evil from your doings." We know that



ing from your midst all the leaven of wrongdoing and wickedness. And in connection with this matter," he remarks, "I may explain here some words in my former letter. I bade you hold no company with fornicators. You live in the world amid a heathen population, and in your daily duties this may not be possible. What I intend is this, if any who bears the name of a Christian brother be such a character, or given up to other sins against which I have warned you, avoid him, do not even eat with him. It is not that I would have myself or you pass judgment on those who are not of a Christian congregation. Them that are without we may leave to God. But the sinner of whom I have been speaking is one of yourselves; therefore put him away.

"Another evil is reported of you. Dare any of you go to law one with another before unbelievers, bringing your Christian profession to shame. Rather ye should seek for arbitration by your brethren, for Christ's people will judge the world.<sup>1</sup> But it is a grave defect to have

St. Paul (Acts xx. 6) tarried at Philippi during the days of this feast, and the abundant quotations from the Old Testament in this Epistle indicate that there were many Jews in the Corinthian Church.

<sup>1</sup> "The saints shall judge the world" (vi. 2). This is

lawsuits at all with each other. Rather suffer wrong. Whereas ye do wrong to your brethren, and forget that the unrighteous man can have no share in the kingdom of God. Some of you were of the unrighteous, but now ye are washed and hallowed to a better life and justified through Christ and the Holy Ghost.

“Further, abuse not Christian freedom. What is lawful is not always expedient. Apply this to the eating of meats. The meat and the belly will both perish. Be not enslaved in such a matter. Yet think not lightly of the body. The body is for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. It is not for fornication.<sup>1</sup> It is meant to be a temple of the Holy Ghost. Do not then sin against it, but glorify God both in your body and in your spirit, for both are His.

“And now let me answer your questions. Because of the times and distress by which we are encompassed, it were well not to marry. But marriage is a safeguard against fornication.

an allusion to Dan. vii. 22. Cf. also Matt. xix. 28 ; Luke xxii. 30. The angels who will be judged by the saints must be the *evil* angels.

<sup>1</sup> “Every sin that a man doeth is without the body” (vi. 18), *i.e.* all other sins are *external* to the body, introduced from without, *e.g.* drunkenness. The evil of such a sin is in its effect, but with fornication the sin is in the least act, for it alienates from Christ the body which is His.

And let not those who are married try to live as if they were not, lest Satan tempt you into sin. All men cannot receive the lesson of celibacy, good though it be; but for the unmarried and widows it is well that they remain as I am. Yet marriage is not sin. Nor should the married seek to be separated, no, not even from an unbelieving partner. For the unbeliever of the pair is consecrated by union with the believer, and so the children are also consecrated. And unbelievers may be won to Christ by the faithful. But if the unbeliever seek for divorce, let it be so.

“Seek not to change the state in which you were called. Let not the circumcised seek to obliterate the record of his Judaism, nor let the Gentile submit to the Jewish rite; for these things are valueless, if God’s commands be kept. Let even those who have been called as slaves be content to abide as they are, remembering that they are the Lord’s freed men.

“I speak what follows without commandment. Abide as ye are, married or unmarried. Yet the unmarried shall have less tribulation. Let not worldly ties of family, or business, or pleasure, captivate you; for the world is passing away. I would have you free from cares. For the married this cannot be. Yet the father of

an unmarried daughter<sup>1</sup> should not think it his duty to forbid her to marry. His case is best, who feels that he need not give her to marriage; thus, in my judgment, it is better to refrain from marriage,<sup>2</sup> if you are able, and I think I have with me the Spirit of the Lord.

“About meats offered to idols. Do not pride yourselves that because you have knowledge you may be careless on this subject. An idol, we know, is nothing. There is one God, even the Father, and one Lord Jesus Christ. But all men have not knowledge. A weak brother may stumble at what you do in respect of eating. Therefore it is the duty of a Christian to refrain from such meats, lest a brother be offended.

“Can you of all persons dispute my apostolic office?<sup>3</sup> Are not ye the seal thereof? True, I did not make myself chargeable to you. But

<sup>1</sup> “His virgin” (vii. 36)=his virgin daughter. Also, “let them marry” in the same verse refers to the daughter and her suitor.

<sup>2</sup> “She is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord” (vii. 39). The last words seem to order that a Christian widow should only take one of the Lord’s people, a Christian brother, for her second husband.

<sup>3</sup> “Am I not free” (ix. 1) means “Am I subject to man’s authority?” “Was not my call given by Christ Himself?” The questions refer to some matters reported to the Apostle in the letter from Corinth, wherein his opponents slighted St. Paul’s claim to be a true Apostle.

need I have supported myself by my own labour? Might I not claim even the support of a wife<sup>1</sup> from you? Has not God said, 'Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn?' Was it for oxen that this was said? Does it not mean that as the ministers under the law were partakers with the altar, so we likewise should live of the Gospel? I have exercised no such claim, nor do I wish to do so. A necessity<sup>2</sup> is upon me to preach the Gospel, and my reward is to make the Gospel without charge.<sup>3</sup> For the Gospel's sake I have become all things to all men, that by all means I might save some. I would liken myself to an Isthmian runner. And I would wish you to be like me. Such an one leaves nothing undone that he may

<sup>1</sup> "To lead about a sister, a wife" (ix. 5)=to take with me, as a wife, one of the Christian women, our sisters in Christ. Had St. Paul married it would have been "in the Lord."

<sup>2</sup> "A dispensation of the Gospel is committed unto me" (ix. 17). The Rev. Vers. is better, "I have a stewardship entrusted to me," *i.e.* I am bound, as one who must give account, to dispense my Master's bread to His household.

<sup>3</sup> "That I abuse not my power in the Gospel" (ix. 18). This is wrong. The words mean "that I do not use to the full my right," etc. The Apostle had the right to be maintained, but preferred to forego what he might have claimed.

gain the prize. Should we do less, who have in view a prize so far beyond theirs?

“And you should bear in mind that this life is a trial time. It was so to our forefathers, and the warnings of their history should be instruction for our lives. They had been baptized and were spiritually supported, just as we are by our sacraments. Let us avoid the sins into which they fell. Be sure that trials will come, but be sure at the same time that God will with the trial prepare a way of escape that ye may be able to bear it. Then have nothing to do with conduct which treats idolatry as a trifling matter. Christians celebrate a communion of the body and blood of Christ. We must not therefore appear to partake of this communion and of idol sacrifices. If there be nothing to raise the question whether the meat set before you have been offered to an idol, then your liberty may be used, but not under other circumstances.<sup>1</sup> You must have respect to the consciences of such as are weak.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than He?” (x. 22)=Dare we venture, as the Jews did, to rouse God’s jealousy? Let us remember their punishments just rehearsed. Are we able to resist His wrath, if it be awaked?

<sup>2</sup> (x. 29, 30). These verses mean, “Abstain from such meats for the sake of another man’s conscience.” I

“Hold fast the traditions which I have given you. In your religious assemblies let your men be uncovered, but your women have their heads covered.<sup>1</sup> Nature herself might teach you this. I must blame you for the divisions of which I am told, and for the disorders in the feast of the Lord’s Supper. Your wealthy members make it a scene of excess,<sup>2</sup> while the poorer brethren are neglected. I taught you otherwise. I urged on you a due preparation for this

admit that you may reply, “Why is my liberty to be judged by another conscience than my own? I eat with thanksgiving, why am I evil spoken of?” To this the Apostle answers, “You are a Christian—give no offence—do all to God’s glory.”

<sup>1</sup> “The woman ought to have power on her head, because of the angels” (xi. 10). “Power” means, the emblem of her husband’s power, her veil; and the reason is, lest the angels be offended at any transgression of order or decency.

<sup>2</sup> To understand the whole passage it must be borne in mind that the Lord’s Supper in the primitive Church followed after a social meal, thus being in accord with our Lord’s institution. The Corinthians had shewn their party feeling and divisions in this meal. For the provisions were contributed by all, each according to his power. But it seems the wealthier members only called their richer neighbours to partake with them, and so the poorer brethren had no share in what ought to have been a common meal, the feast of love, while others were full fed and in no frame of body or mind to celebrate the Eucharist fitly.



solemn feast. Already God has shewn His anger at your wrong-doing by sending sickness and death among you. Remedy this gross fault. Other things connected therewith I will settle when I am with you.

“Then with regard to spiritual gifts. It is not every utterance that can be accepted as spoken in the Spirit<sup>1</sup> of God. All the true gifts come from the same Spirit, and must be of one character, and in harmony with each other. The members of the Church of Christ form one body, in which there can be no divided teaching, no schism. God bestows His Spirit as He will, but each of His gifts will be in accord with all the rest. Yet better than all these gifts, a more excellent way, is that heavenly love, which never fails nor faints. Seek then to attain unto this love, and among spiritual gifts above all others the power to preach the Gospel. This will always edify. There are times when he who speaks with tongues<sup>2</sup> can edify none

<sup>1</sup> The Corinthians had apparently thought that some supernatural gifts might come from the spirit of evil. So St. Paul gives them guidance. “No man calls Jesus, Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.” From the enumeration given in this chapter (xii.) it seems that these divinely bestowed powers were plentifully manifested among the Corinthians.

<sup>2</sup> It would seem from the words of St. Paul here

but himself. To speak with tongues is meant not for the Church at large, but as a means of moving unbelievers.

“Let there also be more order in your congregations. Let each speak in his turn, and let regard be paid to edification. For God is not the author of confusion but of peace. Let not your women become prominent in the Church.<sup>1</sup> Esteem preaching most highly, and after it to speak with tongues, but observe decency and order in all things.

“Of the doctrine of the resurrection I taught you that which I received : that Christ is raised, that He was seen by many, and by me too, though the least of the Apostles. After my teaching, how say some of you that there is no resurrection? If Christ were not risen, your faith would be vain and we should be teaching a lie. But since He is risen we shall be partakers of the resurrection of which He is the first-fruits. For as all have died in Adam, so in Christ shall

(xiv. 13) that the “gift of tongues” was not “a *knowledge* of foreign languages.” For the speaker might be unable to interpret what he uttered.

<sup>1</sup> The words of xiv. 36 imply that there might be some demur on the part of the Corinthians to obey St. Paul, so he asks, “Was it from you that God’s word came forth first? Or are you the only persons who have received it?”

all be raised to life. If there be no resurrection, what avail those baptisms for the dead?<sup>1</sup> and why do we brave perils and death daily in our preaching? Better eat and drink, if this life be all. But it is not so. You have a picture-lesson in the seed which is cast into the ground, and dies, that a new crop may come. We shall die, but only to live in a more glorious estate; from natural our bodies shall become spiritual, from being earthly we shall be conformed to the image of the heavenly. Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God: our bodies shall be changed from corruptible to incorruptible, and death<sup>2</sup> shall be swallowed up in victory. Therefore be strong in the faith, and abound in good works; for your labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.

“About the collections for the Christian brethren, as I said in Galatia, so I say to you. On the first day of the week put aside what each

<sup>1</sup> “Baptisms for the dead” seem to imply that some surviving person submitted himself to baptism with the idea of benefiting one who had died unbaptized.

<sup>2</sup> “The strength of sin is the law” (xv. 56) signifies that the Law, when known, makes sin appear sinful to the conscience, which is thus wounded, but yet the Law in itself has no power to heal the wound it can inflict. So sin seems to be aggravated by the revelation of the Law.

can spare. Some one chosen by you shall carry your alms to Jerusalem, and I will go with him, if you so desire. I am coming to you through Macedonia, and may perhaps winter among you. But I shall abide in Ephesus till Pentecost, for God has opened a door unto me. If Timothy come to Corinth, receive him, and speed him on his journey to me. Apollos will not visit you now, but at some more convenient time. Be ye watchful, steadfast, and loving. Obey those who are over you in the Gospel. The messengers you sent have been a joy to me. The Christians of Asia, and also Aquila and Priscilla, salute you. I subscribe the letter with my own hand. If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema. The Lord cometh.<sup>1</sup> The grace of Christ and my love be with you all."

#### (iv.) THE SECOND EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS.

THE second Epistle to the Corinthians was written from some place in Macedonia, during

<sup>1</sup> "Maran atha"="the Lord cometh," seems to have been a sort of motto or watchword, which the Apostle uses to remind the Corinthians of what was ever one of the uppermost thoughts in the breast of the early Christian teachers.

that sojourn of St. Paul which is briefly alluded to in Acts xx. 2: "When he had gone over those parts [of Macedonia], and had given them much exhortation, he came into Greece." It is to this date that we may with most probability refer that journey as far as Illyricum, of which the Apostle speaks (Rom. xv. 19). The course of St. Paul's travel was from Ephesus to Troas, where he hoped to find Titus (2 Cor. ii. 12, 13), but was disappointed. What had occurred to delay him we are not told, but when Paul had passed on into Macedonia, they there met, and from Titus the Apostle heard what had been the effect of the first Epistle. Timothy must also have joined them at this time; for though at first sent forth to Corinth (1 Cor. iv. 17; xvi. 10), for some cause unknown to us he had been stopped by the way. If we may judge from St. Paul's language (2 Cor. vii. 5-7), it must have been some time after he reached Macedonia that Titus came to him. For he had gone through many afflictions there. "When we were come into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest: we were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears." In the midst of this distress Titus arrived, and his presence brought some comfort to the Apostle. He learnt of the earnest desire

and the mourning of the Corinthian Christians, and also of their fervent mind towards himself; and it was after this report that the second letter to Corinth was sent, from a survey of which we shall best gather the condition of that Church, and the result of St. Paul's previous admonitions. The date of the Epistle is about A.D. 58.

Joining Timothy with himself in the salutation, he addresses both the Corinthians and all other Christians that are in Achaia. As is his wont, he opens the letter with thanks to God. He has been in affliction and danger, but God has comforted him, that so he may be able to send a message of comfort to all those who are partakers of the like sufferings. His stay in Asia had been a period of much trouble<sup>1</sup> and perhaps sickness, for he says he had despaired even of life. But God who raiseth the dead, rescued him from his desperate condition. On Him therefore in all trials does the Apostle hope, and entreats the prayer of his friends in

<sup>1</sup> The language here (i. 8, 9) has generally been taken to allude to the disturbances at Ephesus, and the peril of the Apostle in consequence. But the statement "We had in ourselves the response of death," seems to point rather to some time of severe bodily sickness during which death seemed imminent.

Achaia, that so they may all rejoice together over God's gracious answer.

He then turns to their own circumstances. He testifies that his conscience is clear in respect of the holiness and sincerity of his conduct among them, and he reminds them how some among them had rejoiced over him and his message while he was living in their midst. His first intention had been to cross from Asia to Corinth, and to travel thence into Macedonia, and after that to come back to them once more. But this intention had been frustrated, and from the tone of the letter on this point we can see that there were some among the Corinthians who had spoken of Paul as one on whose promise there could not be much reliance placed.<sup>1</sup> He therefore finds it needful to assert that it was not of his own mind that his first purpose had not been carried out. And whatever some may think of him, the message preached both by himself and his friends had always been one consistent theme, the firm promises of God. And in Christ all God's

<sup>1</sup> "Did I use lightness" (i. 17), *i.e.* was I guilty of fickleness in what I purposed. Did I, he adds lay my plans, like mere worldly arrangements, that with me there might be the Yea, yea, and the Nay, nay, of fickle and wavering schemes, and that I should say Yes and No about the same matter?



promises have their "Yea" and their "Amen," the affirmation of their truth as well as their complete fulfilment to God's glory, through the glad tidings which the Apostles preached. For God confirmed their hearts in believing on Christ, and bestowed His pledge upon them through the Spirit.

"And" (he continues) "one reason for my not coming was that I might spare you. And by this I do not mean that I claim a lordship over your faith.<sup>1</sup> But I wished to visit you with joy, and not in sorrow. And now I can do it. My letter has done its work. The painful subject on which I wrote, was, I am sure, a sorrow to all of you.<sup>2</sup> But the offender has now been punished enough. And I have made proof of you, that ye are obedient to my directions. Therefore forgive him, and whatever you do in this regard I endorse it, lest there should seem to be a want of harmony, and Satan should take advantage thereof to

<sup>1</sup> He claims a right over them in matters of discipline, such as that for which he had rebuked them in the first Epistle. In their joy in believing he could only be a fellow-helper, he had no lordship there.

<sup>2</sup> The A. V. in ii. 5, is incorrect. The meaning of the Original is, "If any have caused grief he hath not grieved me, but to a certain extent (that I press not too hard on him) he has grieved you all."

hinder our work. In my way from Ephesus I came to Troas, where the Lord opened for me a door ; but my anxiety to hear from Titus of your state made me hasten forward into Macedonia. And I thank God who thus leads me as a captive in Christ's triumph-train, for thus I become an offering whose savour tells of life to those who will die unto the world, though unto others it speaks of death. The burden I thus bear is a heavy one, for I speak the word of God in sincerity, as ever 'in my great task-master's eye.'

"But why write I thus to you? I need no letter of commendation either from you or to you. You are my letter, or rather Christ's letter, which all men may read ;<sup>1</sup> for ye bear His impress on your hearts. And for this work I have been permitted and strengthened to be His minister. And my ministry is of the New Testament, of the life-giving Spirit, and not of the letter of the Old Covenant, which was a ministration of death. Yet that had its glory, for the people of Israel could not look steadfastly on the face of Moses when he had spoken with God, though the brightness of his countenance was passing away. Must not then our ministry

<sup>1</sup> *I.e.* men may learn by what they see in you, the nature and power of Christ's gospel which we preach.

be glorious indeed? For it is a ministration of righteousness and not of death. It is of the Spirit, and shall not be done away. And it is this which gives us boldness of speech. We are not like Moses, who put a veil on his face that the people might not behold the fading of his glory.<sup>1</sup> And this veil rests upon the hearts of the children of Israel even now, when Moses is read, and will so continue till they turn to the Lord.<sup>2</sup> But we with face unveiled gaze on the Lord's glory as on a mirror, and by this gazing are transformed into the same image, as from the Lord the Spirit.

"And so we are bold and not downcast. We commend ourselves to the consciences of men by the manifestation of the truth; and if men recognize it not, it is the god of this world

<sup>1</sup> The closing words of iii. 13, literally rendered are "that the children of Israel might not look on the end (termination) of that which was being done away." What Moses did was this. While he spake to the people, his face being glorified, he wore no veil. But after his speech was ended, he put on the veil, for the glory was to depart, and he would not have the people see that happen.

<sup>2</sup> iii. 17 should be translated "Now the Lord is the Spirit." And the Apostle's meaning is that the Spirit, which spake in the Old Testament, could change the hearts of the Israelites, if they but turned to Him, as Christians are changed by gazing on the Lord's glory.

that hath blinded them. For what we preach has been given to us of the Spirit. God hath illumined our hearts and our gospel is the light of the knowledge of the glory of God seen in the face of Jesus Christ. But that God may be all in all, we His messengers, the stewards of His treasure, are mere earthen vessels, men troubled, perplexed, persecuted, but through God comforted, relieved, preserved. Thus given over to death for Jesus' sake, we have yet the life of the Lord made manifest in our mortal flesh.<sup>1</sup> Thus we suffer, and you are blessed. We die daily, that we may be ministers of life to you.<sup>2</sup> Yet we are are not downcast, because we are sure that our affliction, which dureth as it were but a moment, worketh for us more and more exceedingly an eternal weight of glory; for our eyes are set not on things that are seen, but on those that are unseen, even our eternal home in heaven. In this tabernacle of the flesh we groan, longing to be clothed upon

<sup>1</sup> *I.e.* our bodies, exposed to such perils and yet preserved, are witnesses to God's power and a proof that Jesus lives.

<sup>2</sup> iv. 15. Here the sense is, "All that God does through us is for your sakes, that His grace becoming abundant by reason of the increased number of those who are made partakers of it, there may be also abundant thanksgiving unto His glory."

with our habitation that is from heaven. Then our mortal part shall be all absorbed by our new life. And God's Spirit in our hearts tells that this shall come to pass, and in that knowledge we are confident, and labour that our work, whether at home with God, or absent here in the flesh, may be well pleasing unto Him. For we have to appear before the judgment seat, and there receive each one according to what he hath done in the body. Hence we have in our hearts the fear<sup>1</sup> of the Lord, and for this cause we persuade men. God knows that we are sincere, and we trust you know it also, because we would have you as witnesses on our behalf to those who say we are beside ourselves. Whatever we have done or said, be it madness or soberness, is for your sakes, and because we are constrained thereunto by the love of Christ. In His death all died,<sup>2</sup> and that death was undergone that all men might

<sup>1</sup> v. 11, "the terror of the Lord" gives a wrong idea. What the Apostle is anxious to impress on the Corinthians is, that he has the *wholesome* fear of God before his eyes and in his mind.

<sup>2</sup> The Apostle means that because Christ has died, the sting of death is past for all who will die to sin, and thus that which made death a penalty was abolished for believers, when Christ died. So when He died, they died.

henceforth live unto Him, and He is risen and in heaven. Therefore our life unto Him must be a life which is spiritual. In this light henceforth we look upon all men, yea, and even on Christ Himself. For the Christian is new created, he is no longer fettered by his old life. And this is God's gift through Christ whom we proclaim as God's Son, as Him in whom the Godhead dwelt, and who has become the reconciliation of the world. We are His ambassadors, and in His stead, messengers of a spiritual kingdom, we pray you, be ye reconciled to God for the sake of Christ's atonement. We are His fellow-workers, and entreat you that ye receive not the grace of God in vain. And that our ministry may not be blamed, we give no occasion of stumbling to any, but endure all things, and our life thus, through the power of God and the armour of righteousness, becomes a wondrous paradox : dying, behold we live ; sorrowful, we are always rejoicing ; poor to the world, we are rich in Christ ; though having nothing, yet we are truly possessing all things."

Then in an impassioned entreaty the Apostle exclaims, "O ye Corinthians, I am speaking to you out of a full heart ; be ye also in like manner enlarged in your hearts towards me."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In vi. 12, "Ye are not straitened in us." By this the

Shun all communion with the unbelievers and with men of impure lives, for ye are the temple of the living God, and God hath promised to make His dwelling in you. To accept this promise, make yourselves ready by lives of purity and holiness.

“Open your hearts to us: we have neither wronged, corrupted, nor taken advantage of any man, therefore do not be led to think thus of us. I do not say you have so thought, but because my love for you is great, I am thus bold in my exhortation. Ye are indeed my glorying in Christ, and when Titus came to me in Macedonia, I was much comforted amid my many troubles there, by his report of you. My former letter made you sorry, but instead of regretting that, I rejoice thereat, because of the good fruits which your sorrow<sup>1</sup> hath brought forth. In everything ye have approved yourselves to be pure in this matter. My letter was meant to make manifest my earnest care for

Apostle implies that the want of largeheartedness and of a comprehension of what is felt by others was not chargeable on him, but on themselves. He could feel with and appreciate them, if they would but try to do the same toward him.

<sup>1</sup> The “zeal” mentioned in vii. 11, is “zeal towards God,” and by “revenge” in the same verse is meant “the inflicting of just punishment” on an offender.



you, and therefore am I comforted. For all the good which I had spoken of you unto Titus was found true, and the way<sup>1</sup> in which he was received among you has made his affection towards you abundant, and my confidence in you is unshaken."

In chapters viii. and ix. St. Paul urges on the Achaian Churches the subject of the contributions which he collected everywhere for the needy Christians in Judæa. He tells them how<sup>2</sup> the Christians in Macedonia had manifested their liberality, and prays the Corinthians to abound in this as in other graces. Titus, who was coming to them with this letter,<sup>3</sup> would undertake the charge of their bounty. They

<sup>1</sup> "The fear and trembling" (vii. 15), was their dread lest they should not give proper heed to the directions sent from Paul, to whom they were anxious to shew "obedience."

<sup>2</sup> In viii. 2, he describes how the Macedonians, though sorely tried by affliction, were yet so full of Christian rejoicing, that this feeling, even though acting among those who were in deep poverty, resulted in such a rich contribution as to make their liberality remarkable.

<sup>3</sup> With Titus was sent, as we learn from viii. 18, a Christian "brother" "whose praise is in the Gospel throughout all the churches." We cannot decide who this was, though the commendation given to Gaius (Rom. xvi. 23), have inclined some to think that he is intended. There is even more variety of opinion and uncertainty about another "brother" mentioned in verse 22.

had, he reminds them, been forward in their professions of liberality; let them now act up to their profession lest, if any from Macedonia came with him into Achaia, his boasts about Corinth might seem to be unfounded. He desires no such gift from them as should bring them into straits for the sake of relieving others, but only that they, like all the Churches, should do their part to help the brethren that are in want, and they might expect like help if they came to need it. "And God," he says, "will bless your bounty. Many thanksgivings for it shall ascend unto Him, and others shall glorify God for the spirit which they behold in you. Yea," he concludes, "I join in the praises, and cry, 'Thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift.'"

But in the last section of the Epistle there is a great change of tone, so great that some have regarded these four chapters (x.-xiii.) as belonging to a separate epistle. But it is quite possible that while the letter was yet unfinished, news had reached St. Paul of charges made against him and his companions, which rendered the vindication of himself and his ministry, which these chapters contain, altogether necessary, and yet he may not have thought good to unsay any word which he had before set down. On the report of Titus he had written as he felt;

on this fresh intelligence he also speaks out with much authority against the pretensions of the new teachers to whom the Corinthians had lent their ear, and who were maligning the Apostle and the whole character of his work. The disturber is spoken of (xi. 4) in the singular number, as "he that cometh," but that expression is probably only used of one as representing the class of those teachers, who though professing to preach the same Gospel, yet disparaged St. Paul, saying that he walked after the flesh, that his letters spake great things, but that otherwise he was of no account. Against such statements the Apostle directs the boasting of the last chapters of his letter, a boasting which he often speaks of as folly, and to which nothing could have brought him, but the attacks of his opponents, opponents whom he crushes with the weight of his irony, yet in the midst of all never forgets his love for the Corinthians, nor his position as their father in the faith.

The substance of the chapters is briefly this : "Let me not, my brethren, have to come to you, the whole Christian body at Corinth, in the spirit which I think to come against those who speak of me among you as one that walketh according to the flesh. The weapons which I wield are not carnal, and that shall be shewn,

but I wish to give all that desire it an opportunity to shew their obedience.<sup>1</sup>

“Do you judge by outward appearance? Then I have no fear of being put to shame by comparison. I am as truly Christ’s as any man. They may speak of me as only weighty in my letters. They shall know that as I am in my letters, so shall my presence be. But I will not follow my adversaries into self-comparisons and the boastings which they make in the labours of others. I will but testify that God hath distributed unto me a field of labour which has extended as far as unto you, and which I hope, after your faith is increased, may be magnified unto greater abundance, so that I may be allowed to preach the Gospel to the parts beyond you, and not to enter, as these men are doing, into the labours of another.<sup>2</sup>

“But I wish you would bear with me a little in the foolishness of boasting. For I am jealous

<sup>1</sup> In x. 6, he means that he is quite prepared to visit the disobedient with punishment, after all who are willing to be obedient have declared themselves. He will tarry till that number has been made as great as possible, till it has been fulfilled.

<sup>2</sup> “In another man’s line of things” (x. 16) = In the field which God had appointed for another to labour in, and where another (viz. Paul himself) had done the work over which these men were priding themselves.

over you as something that I would present pure before Christ. If the preachers who come unto you professed to be offering another Jesus, then it might be that you should bear with them and with what they say in my disparagement. But if they preach the same Gospel, then I reckon not myself behind even these new guides of yours, who would be more apostolic than the Apostles.<sup>1</sup> I am not lacking in the knowledge of the mystery of the Gospel. True I did not take from you money for my support. Was that an offence? That conduct I will still continue while I am in Achaia, that no man there may have a handle against me on the score of my profiting through the Gospel. There are those who would make such a charge against me, but they are false apostles and shall have an end in accordance with their doings. Now, brethren, though what I say be foolish, yet bear with me ; for, though being wise,<sup>2</sup> as you believe yourselves, ye bear with worse folly than mine. If my adversaries boast of their Jewish birth, of their Christian ministry, of their many

<sup>1</sup> This is the sense, both in xi. 5, and xii. 11, of the words rendered in A.V. "the very chiefest Apostles."

<sup>2</sup> "Seeing ye yourselves are wise" (xii. 19). This is only said in irony. The Apostle takes them at their own value.

labours and sufferings, I have as much, nay more, to say for myself than any of them." And here the Apostle gives a summary of his toils and dangers, which shews us how little a part we have of his whole life-story in the Acts of the Apostles.<sup>1</sup> He then goes on to tell of the spiritual revelations which he had been privileged to receive, but adds after these high grounds for his boasting, "Yet, lest I should be exalted over-much, there was given me a thorn in the flesh." What this may have been we cannot surely know, though the words which follow, "a messenger of Satan to buffet me," seem to define it in part, and to point to some mental or spiritual trial rather than a bodily pain. "Yet," he continues, "the Lord according to His promise, makes His strength perfect in my weakness, and among you He gave signs of my true apostleship by 'signs and wonders and mighty works.' You therefore are only inferior to other Churches in this, that I was no burden unto you when I preached among you. I am now coming once more, and I shall follow the

<sup>1</sup> It seems as though in xi. 32, 33, the Apostle was about to commence a more detailed list of his sufferings, and had begun it with his escape from Damascus, but checked himself by the words of xii. 1, "It is not expedient for me to glory."

same course, and neither I nor those who have been sent by me have acted otherwise. Do not think that I am making an *apologia* to you ; God alone is my judge. I am speaking for your edification, that all these evil feelings may be banished from among you ere I come, and that I may not have sorrow and humiliation over the impenitence of some among you.

“I am coming again to you, and I will not spare those among you that have sinned, seeing that ye seek a proof of Christ that speaketh in me. But examine your own selves, for my prayer is that ye may do no evil. I do not say this that *we* may be approved, but that *ye* may do that which is honourable. For our labour and prayer is for your perfecting. To witness that makes me glad, and I now write to you that when I come I may only have to use the authority which God has given me for building up, and not for casting down.”

Then, ceasing from severity, he concludes with a solemn farewell : “ Be perfected, be comforted, be of the same mind, live in peace ; ” and with a salutation from those Christians among whom he was writing, he invokes on them all alike the grace of Christ, the love of the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost, in words which the Church has since adopted as the most



fitting form of benediction wherewith to conclude her religious services.

We have no means of judging what the effect of this letter was on the Church to which it was sent. We only know (Acts xx. 3) that the visit of St. Paul to Greece, after the Epistle was sent, lasted for three months, and that in the next generation the Corinthian Church was an important centre of Christianity in Europe. But we may reasonably infer that the letter had done its work, and that the opponents of St. Paul were in the main silenced or disregarded. For the three months' visit cannot have been in any great degree disturbed by the condition of the Corinthian Christians, since the Apostle was able during that time to write both the Epistle to the Galatians and that to the Romans, two letters which we may certainly say have exercised more influence on men's minds than any other two writings which the world has known.

#### (v.) THE EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS.

THE teaching against which the last four chapters of the second Epistle to Corinth was directed, was not confined to the Churches of Achaia. Into those regions of Asia where St. Paul had laboured during his second and third

missionary journeys, there had followed him some of those Jewish converts who clung still to the ceremonial law, and would have no door open to Christianity but through Judaism. In Galatia the mischief done by them had been most fatal, and the knowledge thereof must have been brought to St. Paul at the time of his second visit to Corinth.

The Galatians were of that Celtic race of whose instability the modern history of France and Ireland has afforded so many examples. They had received the Gospel from the Apostle himself, and he had tarried among them, detained by that sickness which so often broke down his feeble frame (iv. 13), and which he speaks of as some affliction which might have made him an object of contempt to those who heard him. Nevertheless they had with the warmest enthusiasm welcomed him and his message, and had begun to run well (v. 7) in the Christian race. But the enemy had come and sown his tares among the wheat, or had in many cases borne off altogether the good seed sown ; and now, the Churches which had been so warm in their affection for St. Paul, as to esteem him a very angel of God (iv. 14), were fallen into the slavery of Judaism, and were seeking to be made perfect by the works of the

law. And the preacher whom they had seemed to love was, through the poisonous lessons of their new guides, spoken of as no genuine Apostle of Jesus, as inferior to those who had been first called, as having no true commission from the Lord ; the Gospel which he preached was described as an imperfect message, which, by overthrowing the observances of the Mosaic covenant, was leaving out of the scheme of salvation something which God had required, and offering justification to men with a freedom which had no warrant in the Divine revelation. Against such teaching is the Epistle to the Galatians directed. It was most probably written in A.D. 58, and the severity of its tone is beyond anything which we find elsewhere in St. Paul's writings. There was a rebuke to be administered, and a false doctrine to be crushed for ever, and the Apostle was able to achieve both these ends. Yet before the letter closes we find proof enough that all he writes is written out of zeal for the saving of souls, and in no spirit of self-glorification, and that the Israel of God was the subject of his fervent prayers amid all his severity against the Pharisaism of those who would confine Abraham's covenant to such only as observed the ceremonial precepts of the law of Moses.

In the greeting, which is merely addressed to "the churches of Galatia," the Apostle succeeds in embodying the drift of the whole letter. He speaks as Paul, an Apostle, not of human but Divine appointment, and in invoking on the Galatians the grace of God and of Christ, proclaims Christ as having given Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us out of this present evil world, and thus be a Saviour to men without the works of the law ; and this he declares to be the will of God and our Father. Then at once entering on his subject, he expresses his wonder at their acceptance of another—Gospel he was about to call it, but he checks himself and names it a perversion of the Gospel of Christ, and pronounces a reiterated anathema on those who in this way set forth as a Gospel something different from that which he had preached and they had believed. This, he says, is no language to win men's approval,<sup>1</sup> but that he seeks not ; it is in God's sight that he speaks, and as the bondservant of Jesus Christ. For the Gospel which he preaches is from Christ Himself.

<sup>1</sup> The Judaizing party continually spoke of St. Paul as a "man-pleaser," because by his teaching he relaxed the severe observances of the ceremonial law, which had been found to be a yoke of bondage.

In his earlier life, as they had heard, he had been an earnest Jew, one of the warmest supporters<sup>1</sup> of the Mosaic law, a persecutor of the Church of Christ ; but God had revealed His Son in him, and that revelation was the source of his teaching. It was not the Church of Jerusalem which gave him his commission, though he had visited<sup>2</sup> that city, and for fifteen days had dwelt there with St. Peter. His calling was from Christ Himself, independent alike of the Apostles and of the Church in Judæa. Yet the brethren of that<sup>3</sup> Church knew the nature of his teaching. They knew that the persecutor had become a preacher and they glorified God for the change. They knew too that, on a second visit to Jerusalem, he had refused to allow a Gentile convert to be circumcised. Titus, a Greek, had been his companion at that time, and in spite of the urgent demands of some whom he calls "false brethren," he had not listened for a moment to the sugges-

<sup>1</sup> "And profited . . . above many my equals" (i. 14) = I made progress . . . more than most men of my own age.

<sup>2</sup> From i. 17 it appears that Paul went into Arabia and then back to Damascus before he visited Jerusalem at all after his conversion.

<sup>3</sup> "Unknown by face" (i. 22). For it appears from Acts (ix. 29) that during his stay in Jerusalem Paul disputed against the Hellenic Jews," and this would not bring him to the knowledge of the Christian congregation.

tion that Titus should conform to the Jewish ceremonial rite. And the authorities of the Church in Jerusalem had recognized his work, and had given to him and his fellow-labourer, Barnabas, the right hands of fellowship, and sent them forth as preachers unto the Gentiles, adding only as their charge, that among those to whom they went they should ask aid for the poor Church in Jerusalem. Nay, further to demonstrate how the omission of circumcision was from the first proclaimed by him as no bar to the communion in Christ between Jews and Gentiles, he tells how in Antioch he had rebuked Peter for inconsistency in his behaviour in this respect, and by the narrative marks his equality with, and independence<sup>1</sup> of, even the most prominent of the first-called twelve.

And he sets before the Galatians the language which he used to St. Peter: "Why dost thou seek to make the Gentiles live as do the Jews, while thou, thyself a Jew, livest as do the Gentiles? For we, ourselves born Jews, have believed on Christ Jesus, that so we might be

<sup>1</sup> "Those who seemed to be somewhat . . . added nothing to me" (ii. 6). By this he means that nothing was imparted to him in the way of direction or instruction by those who were deemed most influential in the Church at Jerusalem.

justified, not through the law, but through our faith in Him. And if, after knowing that we cannot be justified by the works of the law, we are found to be no better than the sinners of the Gentiles,<sup>1</sup> shall we charge the fault of our condition upon the Gospel? Nay, Christ is not the minister of sin. And we cannot set up again the works of the law as a means of rescue from sin. Otherwise what we have done in throwing them down must be reckoned to us as a transgression. While living under the law, I have learnt that salvation is not by the law. Therefore to the law I am dead, but I have a new life in Christ. I have been crucified with Him, and my true life is in faith on Him. And I do not frustrate the grace of God, as I should be doing if I fell back upon legal observances. For if righteousness is by the law, then Christ has died for nought."

The Apostle next appeals to the spiritual experience of his converts. "Who did bewitch you," he asks, "and turn you aside?"<sup>2</sup> Do you

<sup>1</sup> As we should acknowledge ourselves to be, if we sought now to be justified by legal observances. For we should be confessing that faith in Christ did not avail to obtain righteousness, but that we were still sinners, and that Christ had only by His death ministered to a state of sin.

<sup>2</sup> "Christ hath been evidently set forth" (iii. 1). This



not remember that the Spirit was given to you through faith only? And will ye now fall back upon the works of the law?<sup>1</sup> Was not the effect of our ministry, and the powers<sup>2</sup> which God shewed forth through us among you, a consequence of the hearing of faith? Just as in the case of Abraham, to whom the promise came, because of his faithful obedience, before he was circumcised, that in him all nations, not Jews only, should be blessed. You see from this that justification comes not by the law, but by faith. Through the law we are all under a curse, because we cannot keep it. But from this curse Christ hath redeemed us by fulfilling the law Himself. Therefore through Him the blessing pronounced on Abraham can come upon the Gentiles, without any need that they should be brought under the law.

“Consider the case of a human testament. No later supplementary clauses alter the scope of alludes to the vivid description of Christ’s passion which they had heard from Paul while he was among them.

<sup>1</sup> “Have ye suffered so many things in vain” (iii. 4). No doubt, both among Gentile and Jewish populations, the first believers had to suffer much for their faith.

<sup>2</sup> “He that worketh miracles among you” (iii. 5). There is little said in the Epistles about the miraculous powers of the Apostles, but clearly St. Paul here reminds the Galatians that such powers had been manifested among them.

the original deed. So the law given to Moses, many generations after the death of Abraham, does not annul the original covenant, which was a promise to the Father of the faithful that in his seed all nations should be blessed. The law was added because the family of Abraham had not all of them Abraham's faith, but became transgressors. But the law was to endure only till the seed should come to whom the promise related. And it was inferior to the original promise, because that came direct from God, whereas the law came only through the hand of a mediator. Is then the law against the promise? That cannot be. Both come from God. And could a law have been given which could make alive, righteousness (which is the condition of life) would then have been of the law. But the Scripture hath shut up all alike, both those who have had the law and those who have not, under sin, that the promise might be God's free gift unto faith. The law has been our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. Now through faith we are Christ's; the tutelage of the law is ended, and by faith we are all, both Jews and Gentiles, heirs of the promise made to Abraham. Or, to use another simile, we Jews, while we lived under the law, have been like children under age: we

have had no more privileges than a slave has : but now that Christ is come, through faith in Him we have come to the full rights of mature sonship, and from our hearts can cry to God as our Father.

“How can ye then turn back from sonship to servitude? Oh, if my labour for you has been in vain! Be as I am, for I am as ye are.<sup>1</sup> When I became as a Gentile among you, you did me no wrong. I came to you in weakness,<sup>2</sup> and ye received me and my message as coming from God Himself. What has become of your former feelings? Let them revive. These new teachers are zealous to lead you on, but in no good way. They would sever you from the Christian body, and make of you a sect that they may be your leaders and you may pay court to them. My zeal was for a good matter, and should have been remembered even in my absence. Oh, my children, that I could be with you, for I am troubled on your behalf!

<sup>1</sup> *I.e.* I became verily a Gentile among you. I made it plain to you by my life that though born a Jew, I had learnt that the ceremonial law was done away by faith in Christ. Do not go back into that legal bondage which you know that I have cast aside.

<sup>2</sup> “Through infirmity of the flesh” (iv. 13). The Apostle appears to have been in some severe sickness during his sojourn in Galatia.

“ But ye who desire to come under the law hearken now to an allegory from that law. Abraham had two sons, one born after nature, the other according to promise. Hagar with Ishmael, her natural son, speak of Sinai, of the law, of bondage, and of the Jerusalem on earth ; while the child of promise is an emblem of spiritual freedom, and of the heavenly Jerusalem, which is our mother. Now ye, who would fain be reckoned for the natural children of Abraham, and who seek for righteousness through the law, are neglecting the more glorious gift of the promise. For we, like Isaac, are the children of the promise. We are not called to be the children of the bondwoman, but of the free.

Stand fast therefore in your freedom, and win your true inheritance through Christ. If you put your trust in the law and its observances, you are severing yourselves from Him. Wait then by faith through the Spirit for the hope of righteousness.<sup>1</sup> Ye were in the right way, and I trust ye will return thereto. He who has misled you shall bear his punishment, whoever he be. He may have told you that I preach circumcision. But if that be true, why am I persecuted ? In that case the stumbling block of the cross would

<sup>1</sup> “ The hope of righteousness ” (v. 5), *i.e.* the gift of eternal life bestowed through Christ on true believers.

be removed. But it is not true, and my wish is that these preachers of circumcision would go the length of self-mutilation, as the heathen do. The one practice has now as much worth as the other.

“You are called unto liberty, but such a liberty that by love ye should serve one another. This is not consistent with biting and contention. The one state is spiritual, the other is carnal, and there is no concord between them. Follow not the works of the flesh, but seek to shew forth in your lives the fruits of the Spirit. For they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh, with its affections and lusts.”

Then, perhaps thinking that some few, more firm in the faith than others, might take occasion from his Epistle to be severe upon their weaker brethren, he gives his letter another tone. “Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such an one, looking to yourselves, for you too may fall. Let each man prove his own work, for each must bear his own burden. Let those that are taught communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things. Whatever a man soweth, that shall he reap. Therefore be not weary in well-doing, for the reaping time will surely come.

“My letter is written in my own large hand,

that you may recognize it all as mine.<sup>1</sup> These Judaizing teachers are only desirous to have you circumcised that they may glory in your flesh. God forbid that I should glory, save only in the cross of Christ. For circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing. All that is worth striving after is to be in Christ, and so to have become a new creature. Peace and mercy be upon all who walk after this rule, and upon the Israel of God.<sup>2</sup>

“Henceforth let no man trouble me. Christ has marked me with His brand as His own bondservant.”

And then, as though his last sentence must be tender, he ends his letter with a blessing, in the closing word of which he names these inconstant Galatians his “brethren.” “The grace of Christ be with your spirit, brethren.”

<sup>1</sup> “How large a letter” (vi. 11). This should be “In how large letters.” The Apostle, either from defective eyesight or some other failing, appears to have written with difficulty and in large unsightly characters. Hence he seldom did more than add the final greetings. But he seems to have written the whole Epistle to the Galatians himself, and this he would have them notice, that they may take it for a sign how much he is troubled at their condition.

<sup>2</sup> “The Israel of God” (vi. 16). The Apostle invents this expression to make a distinction between the true seed of Abraham and the “Israel after the flesh,” as the Judaizing teachers might be called.

Of the Churches of Galatia we have little further history; but the Epistle which their unsteadfastness called forth will for ever be a treasure to the Christian world. Men are still prone to fall away from the spiritual, and to try, as did the Galatians, to be made perfect in the flesh. At such times, as Church history shews us,<sup>1</sup> this Epistle can rouse to new life and recall the wanderers, as we can hardly doubt it did among those for whose profit it at first was written.

(vi.) THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS.

THE Epistle to the Romans must have been sent about the same time as that to the Churches of Galatia, and it deals with the same subject, but in a very different manner. The Apostle had not yet visited the Roman Church, though it was the great wish of his heart to do so. And if his hope was strong that that wish would be soon fulfilled, it is not difficult to understand why he chose the Roman Christians to be the recipients of this most magnificent of all his letters. Their city was the centre of the greatest power and

<sup>1</sup> The Epistle to the Galatians was deeply prized by the Reformers both in Germany and England. Luther called it by the name of his wife—his Catharine de Bora



influence which men up to that date had ever seen, and the people of Rome were in constant communication with every part of the then known world. The Apostle might very naturally wish to give to the Christians of such a city, before he came among them, a full statement and vindication of his teaching as an Apostle of Christ. In the second letter to Corinth, he had in a summary manner dealt with the objections which he found to be raised against him by his Jewish opponents. In the letter to the Galatians he had administered a rebuke to the converts who were falling back from the freedom of Christ to the slavery of the law, and had defended the teaching which from the first he had given both to the Churches of Galatia and everywhere else among the Gentiles. But that letter had been written with all the warmth which disappointed hope can infuse into language, and was fitted only for those who had allowed their feet to slip from the good way in which they had at first been set. The Epistle to the Romans is a calm, dispassionate, argumentative composition, in which the whole case between himself and the Judaizers is set in its true light, and the great central doctrine of justification by faith for ever established as the groundwork of the Christian scheme of salvation. The

sinfulness alike of Jew and Gentile in the sight of God is demonstrated, and it is shewn that for the former their knowledge, and their attempted observance, of the law could not be pleaded in bar of their condemnation. Here, too, the Apostle sets before us a definition, to be gathered rather from the contemplation of his whole language than from any isolated phrases, of what is embraced in his teaching of justification. He then advances to the high topics of God's foreknowledge and man's free will, and with a boldness such as could only come from deep spiritual insight he speaks in language never paralleled of the relation of these two doctrines to each other, and then, lest any should think that the faith of which he spake was merely subjective, he adds in conclusion a noble and practical exhortation to the duties of the Christian life. Of such a letter we can hope to give only the briefest outline. Nearly every sentence of the Epistle is pregnant with meaning, and on many of the single words whole essays have been written to bring out their full significance.

But before proceeding to speak of the contents of this most remarkable letter, a few words must be said about its form. Every reader will have noticed that, towards the close, it seems to have several breaks, each of which might have

formed a termination. Thus, at chap. xv. 33, we have what might have been a closing benediction, and then again at chap. xvi. 20 and 27, as well as the very solemn ending formed by the last three verses. This has led some to the conclusion that we have in the last chapters of the Epistle several forms of ending, each of which may have been the close of the letter when sent to a different Church ; that this noble Epistle was in fact designed to be sent, not only to Rome, but to many other Churches, and when so sent was slightly modified in the final sentences. This opinion is strengthened when we examine the evidence of MSS. In one, what is now the closing benediction appears at the end of chapter xiv. In another it occurs twice over, at xiv. 24 and xvi. 27, while in another the words, "that be in Rome," are left out both in i. 7 and 15. Besides this, it has been the subject of surprise that St. Paul should send so many greetings as are contained in chapter xvi. to a Church which he had never visited. He makes mention, too, of Aquila and Priscilla, and the Church that is in their house. Now it may be that, though driven from Rome by the edict of Claudius, Aquila and his wife had again returned and made their home the meeting place of some of the Roman Chris-

tians ; but in 1 Cor. xvi. 19 we find that they were at Ephesus when St. Paul wrote that letter (A.D. 57), not much more than a year before the date of the Epistle to the Romans, and that they were also at Ephesus when the second letter to Timothy was sent (2 Tim. iv. 19). This circumstance has pointed to Ephesus as the place to which these greetings were sent, of which the closing chapter is so full. And many things lend probability to this opinion. For example, the tone of the commendation given to Phœbe in verses 1, 2 of chapter xvi. is such as could hardly have been used by the Apostle to a body of Christians whom he had never seen ; while the great number of the salutations, embracing six-and-twenty persons, makes it almost certain that the names are those of Christians to whom St. Paul was personally known, as do also the forms of expression used about some of them : “ Mary, who bestowed much labour on you ” ; “ Andronicus and Junias,<sup>1</sup> my kinsmen and my fellow-prisoners ” ; “ Ampliatus, my beloved in the Lord ” ; “ Urbanus, our fellow-worker in Christ ” ; “ Apelles, the approved in Christ ” ; “ Herodion, my kinsman.” These and other like salutations could hardly have been sent to

<sup>1</sup> The names are given here according to the spelling of the oldest MSS.

any Church in which the Apostle had not personally laboured. Then "Epænetus, the firstfruits of Asia,"<sup>1</sup> is hardly likely to have been at Rome, or to have been thus spoken of in a letter addressed solely to the Roman Church. And there is no Church in Asia which suits so well with those allusions to labours and imprisonments which are contained in this chapter as does the Church of Ephesus. True, many of the names are Latin in form; yet still more are Greek; and when we know that the Jews in their dispersion often adopted Latin or Greek names of a form somewhat like their Jewish names, and that many of the early Christians everywhere were drawn from the ranks of the dispersed Jews, the evidence, from the forms of those names of persons, about whom we know nothing, save that they are mentioned here, is not of such a character as to help us to fix on one place rather than another as the destination of these greetings. On the whole, it seems reasonable to conclude that an Epistle which, far more than any other, contains a declaration of the universality of the Gospel, was not meant for one Church alone, though sent at first to the Church of Rome; that

<sup>1</sup> The best authorities read "Asia," and not "Achaia," in xvi. 5.

other Churches also received the same letter, but with a slightly varied termination ; and that a large portion of chapter xvi., containing numerous special greetings, was the form of ending which was given to the letter when sent to some Church in which St. Paul had personally laboured and suffered ; that this Church was more probably in Asia than in Europe, and that no place more suitable than Ephesus can be fixed upon, from all that we know of the history of St. Paul's missionary labours. It may well be that in the Epistle as we now have it, several of the endings used with this letter have been gathered together, and that this is the explanation of the frequent breaks which are found from the end of chapter xiv. to the close of the letter.

Turning to the contents of the Epistle, we find first a most solemn greeting, in the Apostle's own name alone, to all that are in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints. And in the few introductory words the Apostle sums up the scope of the Gospel. It is the revelation of the Son of God in fulfilment of ancient prophecy, His Divinity is proved by the Resurrection, and the glad tidings are to be published to all the world. Then follows a thanksgiving that the faith of the Roman

Christians is known so widely, with an expression of Paul's own desire to come unto them.<sup>1</sup> But soon he enters on the theme of the whole letter, the Gospel of Christ, which is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. In this Gospel God's righteousness is made plain to the eye of faith. And even the prophets had foretold that the way to become righteous<sup>2</sup> was by believing in God.

God has revealed His wrath against all ungodliness and unrighteousness, and that wrath must come on all, for all are sinners. To prove this, St. Paul paints in the darkest colours the condition of the heathen world, sunk in all foul lusts, and given over to a reprobate mind. After that he passes to the Jew (ii. 17), and without saying in so many words that he too must take his place side by side with the sinners of the Gentiles, yet in language which admits

<sup>1</sup> The wondrous humility of the Apostle is seen in i. 12, where he speaks of their faith as likely to be a comfort to him, quite as much as his own would be to them. "The mutual faith both of you and me."

<sup>2</sup> "Righteousness is revealed from faith to faith" (i. 17), *i.e.* to him who hears the Gospel without faith it is hidden, but to the faithful hearer first a small degree and then gradually more and more, of the scheme of salvation is made plain.



of no dispute, he leads up to his conclusion, that the name of God is through them blasphemed among the Gentiles, and thus does he demonstrate that among all men sin does everywhere abound. And outward observances profit not the Jew if he fail, as he does and must, in the fulfilling of the law. The advantage to the Jew is that he was made the first recipient of the oracles of God, but this may be only the means<sup>1</sup> of increasing his condemnation, that he has not profited by the privileges of which he was made the first partaker.

“But now,” he continues (iii. 21), “apart from the law, a righteousness of God hath been manifested, a righteousness which both the law and the prophets had before testified that God should bestow upon men. And this is bestowed on those who believe in Jesus Christ, not as their desert, but through their faith. And it is bestowed on all that believe without distinction; for God is not the God of the Jew only, but also of the Gentile.”

Then the Apostle asks a question (iii. 31) which he was sure every Jew would ask on

<sup>1</sup> “What if some did not believe?” (iii. 3). These words refer not to unfaithfulness under the law, but to the rejection of Christ as the true fulfiller of the prophecies.

hearing such words, words placing him on the same level with the heathen world: "Do we then make void the law through faith?" and answers it also with the assertion that the law was really established thereby, set on its true foundation, put into its due place in God's scheme of salvation. The promise had been long before the law, and the latter was only a later detail in the Divine plan. And he goes back for his evidence to the history of him to whom the promise was made. Abraham believed God, and that faith was counted unto him for righteousness; but it was reckoned unto him before he was circumcised. Thus he can be the father of the faithful, whether of the circumcision or of uncircumcision. The promise was made to him, not through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. And thus the gift is of God's grace, and the promise made sure to all the seed. And the testimony of the Scripture, that this was so, was not written for Abraham only, but for our sakes also. For righteousness shall also be reckoned unto us, if we believe on Him that raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, whose death was for our sins, and His resurrection to effect our justification.

The Apostle then goes on to describe the happiness of this condition. In it we can have

peace with God, access into His favour, and joy in the hope of His glory. Nay, more, we can rejoice in tribulation, because God's love is shed into our hearts. And this love was manifested while we were sinners, and through Christ's death, whereby we are reconciled to God. So it comes to pass that as sin<sup>1</sup> reigned through the one man Adam over all his race, so through the righteousness of the one man Jesus Christ shall grace reign unto the eternal life of those who believe on Him. "But you may ask," he proceeds (vi. 1), "shall we, because grace abounds unto sinners, continue in sin, that God's grace may be more abundantly shewn?" "Nay," he replies, "our union with Christ is a union unto His death. As He died so must we die unto sin. Therefore over the members of Christ sin must have no more the lordship. They are not under the law, but under grace. And on that grace they may not presume, and live in sin. Those who so continue are not servants of Christ. Therefore having been

<sup>1</sup> "The law entered, that the offence might abound" (v. 20). There had been sin in the world before the law, but where there was no law sin could not be reckoned; when however the law came, man's knowledge of what sin was, and that he himself was a sinner, was increased thereby, and thus the offences seemed to multiply.

made free from sin potentially by the offer of free justification, grow ye in grace as by the Spirit ye are helped to do, and bring forth fruit unto sanctification, and so in the end shall ye attain unto everlasting life.

He next gives an illustration of what it is to be no more under the law. Like as a woman is free from the law of her husband after he is dead, so the Christian believer is freed from the Mosaic law by Christ. And as the widow may marry another husband, so may they be united unto Christ who is risen from the dead. And by this union the life-giving Spirit, which can guide and help toward holiness, is substituted for the letter of the law, which only gave to men the consciousness that they were sinners, but no deliverance from their sins. For that was the effect of the law. The law was not itself sin, but it wrought in man the knowledge of his sins. So that, before the law was accepted, sin might be said to be dead, but after the law was known sin<sup>1</sup> started into life.

<sup>1</sup> "Sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me" (vii. 11). The Apostle means that temptation to sin beguiled sinners just as it had done before the commandment was given, but now, under the law, the tempter turned round on the sinner, and after deceiving him, showed him that by the law death was the penalty of his sin.

Man was made conscious thereby of the conflict between the spirit and the flesh. And so the Apostle, speaking of his own soul's experience, calls the flesh "the body of this death," from which alone deliverance can be found in Christ. But in Him is now no condemnation for those who walk after the Spirit. They have a sense of life and peace. The body of those in whom Christ dwells is dead because of their own sin, but their spirit is life because of Christ's righteousness, and thus they can hope that the God who raised up Jesus will also, through the indwelling Spirit, quicken their mortal bodies. Therefore must they mortify the deeds of the body, and in so doing they may be called to suffer for Christ, but shall also surely be glorified with Him. And no sufferings in this life are worthy to be compared to the glory which shall be revealed towards them that believe. The waiting for the redemption of the body will be a time of anguish.<sup>1</sup> But the

<sup>1</sup> In viii. 19-21, by "the creature" is meant "the created universe" as distinguished from man, and the sense is: "The created universe over which man was at first made lord, was rendered subject to vanity, to all the confusion and curse which man's sin brought in, and this was done by God in the hope that along with man creation should also be delivered from corruption." Verses 20 and 21 should be thus connected.

Spirit helpeth our infirmities, and all things work together for good to them that love God. And if we have God on our side, what need we fear? There is nothing in time or in eternity that can separate us from His love which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

In the next three chapters (ix., x., xi.), the Apostle treats of the important question of the partial rejection of the Jews, and the cause thereof, as also of the calling of the Gentiles into the covenant with God, and closes with the assurance that Israel is not wholly and utterly cast off. "I grieve," he says, "in my heart for my kinsmen of Israel, to whom God gave at the first His covenant, His law and His promises. But God's word has not come to nought, because some who were called Israel have hardened their hearts. For it is not the children of Abraham according to the flesh that are of necessity the children of God. The heirs of the promise, the spiritual children, are counted for a seed. And these positions were illustrated when God chose Jacob rather than Esau, even before the children of Isaac had been brought into the world. And we may not call God unrighteous for such a choice. He has declared in His word that He had a set purpose in what was done, and that even in the

rejected, as in Pharaoh,<sup>1</sup> God's power was to be shewn, and His name spread abroad.

"Nor may men murmur, and say, 'God cannot then find fault, for none can oppose His will.' The creature cannot reproach the Creator. Some are vessels of mercy, that the riches of God's glory may be made known through them; but the vessels of wrath, fitted for destruction, shall likewise testify before men to the power of God's wrath, and also to His long-suffering. And so when the Gentiles have attained unto righteousness, it is because they were faithful, though without the law; while the Jews, with the law of righteousness, did not attain thereunto, because they sought it not by faith.

"My heart's desire for Israel," he says, "is that they may be saved. Their error is that they endeavoured to work out a righteousness of their own, and forgot that Christ, and faith

<sup>1</sup> "For this same purpose have I raised thee up" (ix. 17). These words signify that God had preserved and upheld Pharaoh, so that by the long line of penalties inflicted on him, God's power might be more manifested than it would have been by an immediate overthrow of the offender. And God's mercy was shewn too, for He had not cut off the sinner at first, but spared him and shewn him His power that he might tremble at it and repent.



in Him, is the end of the law. And this is the Gospel which we preach: 'Confess with thy mouth that Jesus is the Lord, and believe in thine heart that God raised Him from the dead, and thou shalt be saved.' And this message is sent both to Jew and Greek alike. It was sent first to the Jews. But they do not all hearken, and that this should be so was foretold by Moses and the prophets. But God has not cast off His people. All Scripture speaks of a remnant that shall be saved. But it cannot be by the works of the law. Israel, seeking salvation thus, did not find it; only the elect remnant who were not hardened attained thereunto by grace. But the stumbling<sup>1</sup> of Israel is not to be for ever. Through their fall salvation has been offered to the Gentiles. But if the whole Gentile world has been blessed in their loss, how much greater blessing shall all nations have through their restoration!

"And their history should be a warning for the Gentiles. If the Jews were cast off, the same may happen to the Gentiles, who can only stand by faith. Let them therefore walk in

<sup>1</sup> "Have they stumbled that they should fall" (xi. 11), *i.e.* Has their stumbling been such that it shall end in entire overthrow, shall the people of the covenant come under entire condemnation and ruin?

fear. The partial hardening of Israel shall continue till the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. But <sup>1</sup> still they are God's beloved for the fathers' sake. God does not repent of His purpose. Israel shall be restored. And thus the promise shall be fulfilled, and both Gentile and Jew be partakers of God's mercy. God's ways are unsearchable; but of Him and through Him and to Him are all things. Therefore His be the glory for ever.

"But I beseech you," he continues (xii. 1), "think not of the faith which bringeth salvation as unfruitful in good works. Let your bodies be a living sacrifice. Live in holiness. Cherish no high thoughts, but lead a sober life. Strive after unity as members of one body, and use rightly the gifts which God bestows on each of you. Let love of the brethren abound among you, and let it be manifested in act and word. Indulge in no feelings of revenge, but conquer what is evil around you by the good within yourselves. Be obedient to all rulers,<sup>2</sup> for it is

<sup>1</sup> "As concerning the gospel," etc. (xi. 28). In respect of the Gospel message they are alienated from God, and you Gentiles profit thereby, but having been made God's chosen people, the love of God towards them does not fail.

<sup>2</sup> "Thou shalt have praise of the same" (xiii. 3), *i.e.* thou shalt be praised by the power to which thou hast shewn thyself obedient.

through God that they are set up, and in obeying them we honour Him. Seek after that love which is the fulfilling of the law, and all the more, because the time is short, and the works of darkness befit not the children of light.

“Let not questions of outward observances, of meats and drinks, make you judges one of another. Each man shall give account for himself in these things unto God. But withal be careful to put no stumbling-blocks in one another’s way. Destroy not, by too great use of liberty,<sup>1</sup> him for whom Christ died. It is good not to eat flesh nor to drink wine, nor to do anything whereby a brother stumbleth. He is the happy man who in the use of the freedom which faith in Christ has given him does not bring any condemnation on himself. They who are strong should restrain themselves in things lawful, because others are weaker than they. Christ pleased not Himself. Follow after His example, and may God grant that both the Jews and Gentiles among you may be like minded toward each other. For Christ

<sup>1</sup> “Let not your good be evil spoken of” (xiv. 16). Do not cause men to have hard things to say of you because you have used “your good,” *i.e.* your stronger faith and greater liberty, so as to be a stumbling-block to others.

has come to confirm to the Jew the promises made unto the fathers, and that the Gentiles may glorify God for His mercy. May ye be filled with all joy and peace in believing, that so ye may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost.

“I believe of you that ye strive to live thus together, but as Christ’s minister I put you in remembrance. For He made me His minister unto the Gentiles, and has enabled me to spread His Gospel from Jerusalem even to the distant parts of Europe. I have oft intended to come unto you also, and when I journey into Spain I will surely do so. But first I must go to Jerusalem, and I ask for your prayers that I may be delivered from those in Judæa who believe not, so that at length I may come unto you.”

Then with a chapter, already spoken of, full of salutations, intermixed with exhortations to unity, and in which Timothy and others are joined with the Apostle in the closing greetings, this, the greatest of St. Paul’s letters, concludes; the final benediction, like the opening greeting, being a summary of the doctrine of the whole Epistle.

(vii. viii. ix. x.) THE EPISTLES OF THE  
CAPTIVITY.

SOON after this letter was sent, which must have been about the year 58 A.D., St. Paul carried out his intention of going to Jerusalem. By a circuitous route, because of the plots of his Jewish adversaries, he travelled into Macedonia, then along the coast of Asia Minor, and at Miletus was visited by the elders of the Church of Ephesus. From thence by several stages he came to the Holy City. But neither his own prayers nor the prayers of his friends availed to rescue him from the attacks of the unbelievers in Judæa. In the Acts, St. Luke tells us in brief the story of Paul's willingness to do much that he might disarm Jewish prejudice, but that it was all in vain. He was seized, even in the precincts of the temple, and only rescued from the violence of his countrymen by the strong hand of the Roman soldiery. Next followed the two years' long imprisonment under Felix (from 59 to 61 A.D.), and then the appeal to Cæsar, and in this way, and not as he hoped, did St. Paul arrive in Rome, not as a preacher, but as a prisoner. For two years more (61 to 63 A.D.), he was under restraint in the imperial city; but though he was a prisoner, the Word of God was not bound; for from that hired

lodging in Rome were sent forth probably many letters beside the four which have been preserved to us, which are the Epistle to the Ephesians, that to Colossæ, that to the Philip-pians, and that to Philemon. These Epistles of the Imprisonment, some have referred to the time when the Apostle was detained in Cæsarea ; but the internal evidence is strongly in favour of Rome as the place whence they were sent, and so their date must be placed somewhere between A.D. 61 and A.D. 63. We are not told to what circumstances St. Paul owed his release from captivity in Rome. His cause was heard in the Imperial court, and he was for a time in doubt what his sentence might be. But amid all, his labour ceased not. He preached in his prison the kingdom of God, and taught with all boldness the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, and was happy in this, that amid Roman indifference and Jewish hate, no man forbade him so to do.

Of the Epistles of the Captivity it is impossible to pronounce in what order they were written, though there are a few indications which may guide us to a conjectural conclusion. Thus, when the Apostle writes to Philemon (22), "Prepare me a lodging," we feel sure that he considered his release close at hand. It is

true that his hope may have been disappointed, but that it was so, we do not know. Now if the letter to Philemon were sent toward the close of the second year of his imprisonment, the Epistle to the Colossians must be dated at the same time, for it was sent by the same persons (Col. iv. 9). And in the Ephesian Epistle (vi. 21) we find the same Tychicus spoken of as the bearer of that letter and some oral explanations, just as in the Epistle to Colossæ. We shall see reason afterwards to think that the letter sent to Ephesus was intended to be a circular letter, and not to be for the use of the Ephesians alone. And if this be so, it seems most likely that St. Paul, being about to send Tychicus to Colossæ, availed himself of the opportunity which such a journey afforded to send a general letter to those Churches which were in connection with the Asiatic metropolis. We should therefore place the letter to Ephesus last in order among those of which Tychicus was the bearer. But they must have been written at no great interval from one another, and must all have been made ready for that one journey into Asia. The letter to Philippi may have been written somewhat, but not very much, earlier. St. Paul there also (ii. 24) expresses the same hope of his



release, as in the Epistle to Philemon, though his words shew that his cause was in a somewhat critical position, and point to a time when the hearing was not so far advanced. But all the four letters must be placed in the last year of the imprisonment, and the order which seems best to suit with the internal evidence is (1) the letter to Philippi; (2) that to Philemon; (3) that to Colossæ; (4) that to the Ephesians.

*(a) The Epistle to the Philippians.*

THE Church of Philippi was St. Paul's especial joy. It had been founded amid much affliction during his second missionary journey (Acts xvi.), but had given him abundant proofs of faith and love, and no cause for reproof by a lapse into error. The Apostle had visited the Church since its foundation (Acts xx. 2-6), but St. Luke makes no mention of its condition at that time. We may gather, however, from St. Paul's letter, evidence enough that the work of the Gospel had never slackened in Philippi. He thanks God for their "fellowship in the Gospel from the first day until now," and testifies that they "have always obeyed, not as in his presence only, but much more in his absence." And as at the first they had minis-

tered to Paul's need by sending "once and again" (iv. 16) relief to him while he was in Thessalonica, so now in his Roman imprisonment their liberality had manifested itself. They had learnt that he was a prisoner, and had sent one of their number, Epaphroditus, to bring him pecuniary aid, and to relieve by his ministrations the necessity of their beloved Apostle. Amid his zealous work Epaphroditus had fallen sick, and news of the sickness had reached Philippi. He was now recovered, and himself felt anxious to relieve the minds of his brethren at home by shewing himself before them. This was the occasion on which St. Paul's letter was sent, and above all his Epistles it is full of Christian exultation, and abounding with exhortations to joy in the Lord.

The letter opens with a salutation<sup>1</sup> and invocation, which is followed (i. 3-11) by some words of thanksgiving and prayer, which, like the salutations and prayers<sup>2</sup> at the end of

<sup>1</sup> Timothy is joined with St. Paul in the salutation because he was well known to the Philippians as the Apostle's companion. We can see a trace of the growth of church order in the mention of "bishops and deacons" along with the congregation, "the saints."

<sup>2</sup> "That ye may approve things that are excellent" (i. 10) should be "that ye may distinguish between things that differ," *i.e.* know to choose the good and refuse the evil.

chapter iv., may be called the setting of the Epistle. The rest of the letter deals with three main subjects; the first, or personal portion, is contained in i. 12-26; ii. 19-30; iv. 10-18. In these sections St. Paul sends news to his Philippian friends of the success of Christ's Gospel in Rome,<sup>1</sup> in spite of his own imprisonment, and the contentions of some of its preachers. Over this success he rejoices, and is ready now to die, but feels sure that he will be spared in life, because God has more fruit yet for him to reap, even in the Church at Philippi. He expresses (ii. 19-30) his desire to send Timothy to them, mentions his own hope of coming, and their love to him as shewn by the mission of Epaphroditus, whose services to himself and zeal for Christ's cause commend him to the regard of the whole Church at home. Then (iv. 10-18) the Apostle dwells not only on the last token of the love of the Philippians, which he speaks of as a new blooming of their anxiety for him, but also on their previous unexampled bounty, which he thankfully accepts as evidence that his labour has not been without fruit.

The letter contains two sections of exhorta-

<sup>1</sup> "In all the palace" (i. 13), by this the Apostle intends "in the barrack attached to the imperial palace." In this barrack (*prætorium*) he was a prisoner.

tion (i. 27-ii. 18, and iv. 1-9) to unity. The Apostle had learnt, perhaps from conversation with Epaphroditus, that some, whom he speaks of as adversaries (i. 38), had succeeded in fostering a spirit of disunion. For this reason he exhorts them against vainglory (the parent of division) and enforces his lesson by the example of Christ. He specially appeals (iv. 2) to two female members of the Church (Euodia and Syntyche) to strive against this spirit of contention, that the Church may have cause for joy, and that the God of peace may dwell among them.

The third topic of the Epistle is a warning against false teachers, and takes up the whole of chapter iii. The Judaizers, by teaching the necessity of circumcision, had troubled much the Gentile converts. The mischief had not spread in Philippi, but it might do so, and Paul therefore points out that the legal observances on which these men insisted had lost their value now that Christ was preached. And he points the Philippians to his own life, trained as the strictest of Jews, but now, through Christ's grace, enabled to see that the old things of the law are to be left behind. Not that the Christian will be without law. He will ever be learning more of Christ, and thus

getting more light about his duty. "Therefore," he concludes, "be joint-imitators of me, and shun those who are a law unto themselves, and who mind earthly things. The Christian's true country is in heaven, and he is ever looking for the coming of his Lord to call him thither, that so he may be made like<sup>1</sup> Christ through seeing Him as He is."

There is in the Epistle a passage of much doctrinal interest (ii. 5-8), where the Apostle speaks of Christ's humiliation in His life on earth, which some have interpreted as evidence against the Divine nature of our blessed Lord. But the passage must be taken with its context. St. Paul wants the grandest possible example of self-denial, and finds it in Christ. Because Jesus was God and became man, His humiliation is all the greater. But St. Paul does not here teach other doctrine than St. John. The Word was indeed made flesh, and dwelt among us, yet the same Word was also in the beginning, and then was with God, and was God.

<sup>1</sup> "Our vile body" (iii. 21) should be "the body of our humiliation." It signifies the body in which we now suffer, as contrasted with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

*(b) The Epistle to Philemon.*

THE short letter to Philemon arose out of the following circumstances. Onesimus, a slave of Philemon, a resident of Colossæ (Col. iv. 8), had deserted and apparently robbed his master, and, coming to Rome from Asia, had found out, or been brought to St. Paul, and by him converted to Christianity. The Apostle must needs urge on his son in the faith to make all the atonement possible for the wrong which he had done, and so enjoined on him to return to his state of bondage. The letter which St. Paul wrote was to be carried with him, and to plead for his forgiveness and reception into Christian brotherhood. We do not know how St. Paul first met with Philemon, but the letter intimates that he was one of the Apostle's converts, and was in intimate and close relation<sup>1</sup> with him. The Apostle addresses not only Philemon, but also two other persons, one of whom is generally held to have been the wife, the other the<sup>2</sup> son, of Philemon; and he like-

<sup>1</sup> From the expression (Philem. 18), "Put that on mine account," it has been supposed that the Apostle had business connection with Philemon, perhaps through some common trade as in the case of Aquila and Priscilla.

<sup>2</sup> Archippus appears (from Col. iv. 17) to have been a minister of the Church at Colossæ.

wise speaks of the Church to which Philemon gave a place for assembly in his house. From all which we may gather that Philemon was a prominent person among the Christians at Colossæ (Col. iv. 9), and that though St. Paul had not visited that city, yet elsewhere, perhaps in Ephesus, Philemon had become closely united to the Apostle. The letter of St. Paul is most remarkable for the way in which the writer forgets himself and his claims. He speaks much of the good deeds of Philemon, but merely hints at his own greater services. He is tender towards the offending slave, even putting himself in his place, but yet does not forget that he has offended.

This Epistle forms an unique part of the New Testament writings. It deals with no doctrine, but only with a problem of social life, and it shews us, in so doing, that Christianity was not meant to effect sudden social revolutions, such as setting slaves free, but only, by enforcing true principles, to bring all men unto freedom and brotherly love, because they have learnt as Christians that they are to be one in Christ.

The Epistle has often been compared with two letters of Pliny (Ep. ix. 21 and 24) on a similar subject, but the comparison shews how



much Christianity has brought the Apostle beyond the standpoint of the Roman consul. Pliny's language is doubtless fine, but there is no plea in it which goes to the heart like Paul's: "For love's sake, I beseech thee, receive him as myself." Luther says of it, "Just as Christ did for us with God the Father, so does St. Paul for Onesimus with Philemon."

(c) *The Epistle to the Colossians.*

WITH Philemon's letter was sent also the Epistle to the Colossian Church. Colossæ, as well as those other cities of the Lycus valley, Laodicea and Hierapolis, was the seat of a Christian community, whom St. Paul knew of, but had not visited. He had found, however, as this letter shews, that the Christians of these Churches were in danger from some erroneous teaching with regard to the person and office of Christ, and to avert this is the most important object of the Epistle. To this subject is devoted the portion from i. 13 to iii. 4. Men were beguiling the converts with persuasiveness of speech, making spoil of them through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. Language like this is aimed at Gnostic heresy. But there were

also some who would pass judgment upon the Christian flock in respect of meats and drinks, feasts, new-moons, and Sabbaths. This must have been the party of the Judaizers. There were some, too, who were superstitiously devoted to the worship of angels, and who seem to have taught that it was a mark of humility to approach God, not by direct access, in supplication, to His throne, but by the interposition of angelic mediators. The Apostle points out that the humility, which such teachers professed, was but a cloak for pride, and a way of arrogating to themselves deeper knowledge of mysteries than was possessed by others. With the teaching of these men there was also joined a stern asceticism, which St. Paul declares to be a show of self-imposed religious restraints and mortification of the body, but which did not truly serve the end of guarding against excesses of the appetites. Against all these enemies of the faith St. Paul sets forth Jesus as the Son of God, the image of the Father, the Creator of all things, the Head of the Church, the Redeemer of mankind, and in whom are to be found all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. He further exhorts the Colossians to walk as they had been instructed, regarding not outward rites, as circumcision, nor the arbi-

trarily imposed regulations about meats and drinks, but being buried through baptism with Christ, to strive like Him to rise to new life, and to seek those things which are above.

Beyond this important section, the Epistle, which, like nearly all the rest, opens with a salutation, thanksgiving, and prayer (i. 1-13), is devoted to general and special precepts (iii. 5-iv. 6), and after that concludes with some personal messages (iv. 7-18) and a farewell greeting. We find from it that Timothy was now with St. Paul at Rome, and that Epaphras had brought the Apostle news of the condition of the Churches at Colossæ, Laodicæa, and Hierapolis; that Mark, the cousin of Barnabas, was now working earnestly with St. Paul, and was probably soon to be sent on a mission to the Asiatic Churches. Luke, Aristarchus, and Demas are also mentioned in the final messages; so that we can gather that the Apostle had the solace of much companionship in his prison, and that an active intercourse was kept up by him between Rome and the other Churches for which he was bound to care. We learn, too, that the letter now sent was not for Colossæ alone, and that another Epistle had been sent to Laodicæa, which the Colossians were to consider as addressed to themselves

likewise. From this letter, perhaps, more than from any of the others we get a view of the activity and unwearying zeal which the Apostle displayed throughout his whole life, spending and being spent, and ceasing not, even though his final words have to be "Remember my bonds."

*(d) The Epistle to the Ephesians.*

IN the first verse of the Epistle to the Ephesians some very ancient authorities omit the words "at Ephesus," and it has therefore been held by many that this letter was really intended to be encyclical, and that Tychicus was at liberty to insert the name of each Church to which he gave copies in the course of his Asiatic visit. This view of the character of the Epistle is supported by the absence of all personal salutations, which would hardly have been the case if the letter had been sent to Ephesus alone, in which city the Apostle had spent three busy years, and where he must have had many friends. Like the Epistle to the Romans, this letter speaks more fully of a doctrine which had been set forth briefly when St. Paul was writing to another Church. He had dwelt shortly in the Epistle to Colossæ on the

person and office of Christ ; in this letter he enters on the subject with greater fulness, setting forth specially the adoption of Christians in Christ, and their consequent reception of the gift of the Holy Ghost, and he dwells much on the universality of the Gospel.

After the address and invocation, the Apostle proclaims in his words of thanksgiving the merciful decree of God from all eternity, that all men alike should attain adoption as sons of God through Christ ; that this was accomplished through the death of Christ, whereby we have forgiveness of sins ; and that in Christ all things are, in the fulness of time, to be gathered together in one, to the praise of God's glory.<sup>1</sup> Then in his prayer he implores that the Church may receive through the Spirit, wisdom by which to recognize and accept this

<sup>1</sup> The early Gentile congregations needed to have the doctrine of God's eternal purpose set before them as it is in this Epistle. For questions would arise as to whether there had been a change in God's plan ; whether having at first chosen the Jews, He had only at a later time enlarged His mercy to the rest of mankind. St. Paul calms the minds of the converts on such matters, by shewing them that the adoption of the Gentiles had been part of God's eternal purpose, and confirms his teaching (iii. 1-6) by the assertion that it was specially to make known this truth, which he himself had received by revelation, that he was made the minister of the Gentiles.

grace of God, which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead, and gave Him to be head over all things to the Church, which is His body. After this he goes on to shew that the life which Christ bestows is needed both by Gentiles and by Jews, and that God in His mercy hath quickened both with Christ, offering salvation to both through Him, a salvation by grace through faith. "Ye," he continues, "were Gentiles, having no share in God's covenant: aliens, without God in the world. But now through Christ ye are brought nigh, and salvation through Him is offered to Jew and Gentile alike. His cross hath made peace, broken down the wall of partition, and the glad tidings of the Gospel are preached to them that were afar off, and also to them that were nigh. Therefore ye are now of God's family, a part of that great spiritual temple of which Christ is the corner-stone. I therefore (for I am set apart as the Apostle to the Gentiles, to make known unto them the unsearchable riches of Christ) pray that ye may be strengthened by the Spirit's power to grasp the greatness of this love of Christ, that so ye may be filled with all the fulness of God."

He then proceeds to exhort the converts to live worthily of this noble calling, and to shew

that they are alive to the truth that all things are to be made one in Christ ; that they waver not in their faith, nor follow again those lusts of the Gentiles in which they had once walked ; but, as awakened Christians, seek unto the light which is promised in Christ Jesus. Passing then from general duties to such as are more particular, he dwells on the relations that should exist between wives and husbands, children and parents, servants and masters, in each position laying down the great principle that the life should be as unto the Lord, and in His sight. Then, knowing how hard the conflict would be, and how vain if attempted in human strength alone, he describes in a noble passage that panoply of God which the warfaring Christian must wear through this world's trials, and having mentioned constant prayer as the last of the weapons, he entreats their prayers for himself that, though in bonds, he may be strengthened to open his mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the Gospel. He concludes, after saying that Tychicus, the bearer of the letter, would tell them all his state, by a solemn invocation of grace and peace on all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.

This letter closes the list of those writings



of St. Paul which fall within the time embraced in the history of the Acts. For the rest of the Apostle's letters we have no parallel history with which to arrange and compare them, but must draw all that we learn from the scanty contents of the letters themselves.

(xi. xii. xiii.) THE PASTORAL EPISTLES.

THE Pastoral Epistles, as the two letters to Timothy and the one to Titus are called, have that name because they consist mainly of directions for the guidance of these two disciples in their *pastoral* care. Timothy had been exhorted by St. Paul to tarry at Ephesus (1 Tim. i. 3) while the Apostle himself crossed over into Macedonia, and in a similar way Titus had been left by St. Paul in Crete to superintend the Church organization in that island. Before noticing the contents of these three Epistles, it may be well to piece together, as far as we are able, the allusions contained in them which help us to frame some probable account of St. Paul's movements after his release from his first imprisonment. We know (Philem. 22) that his purpose was to visit Colossæ, and of course the other Churches close at hand, as soon as he was set free. He intended also to go to Philippi

(Phil. ii. 24); but if he carried out his wish to send Timothy to that Church, we may well suppose that his own visit to the Philippians was postponed until he had crossed over into Asia. Thither it seems likely that Timothy came to him, and they perhaps both made some stay among the Christians of the valley of the Lycus with whom this would be St. Paul's first opportunity of gaining a personal knowledge. Coming on towards the coast, and tarrying some time in Ephesus, Paul then resolved to go over into Macedonia, but urged his younger companion to stay behind, and take for a while the oversight of the Christians in that great metropolis, and it was probably from some place in Macedonia that the first letter to Timothy was sent for his guidance in the oversight of the Ephesian Churches. Nothing would be more natural than that the Apostle from Philippi should take the journey which he had taken before, and going into Greece should visit again the Church of Corinth, from which city the voyage to Crete would be easily made. Paul had learnt in some way (Tit. i. 5) much about the needs of the Church in that island, and in whatever manner he came thither, he deemed it wise to leave Titus in charge, that he might ordain elders, and set in order the things

that were wanting. He himself then departed, and going, it may be, to Ephesus or into Macedonia, purposed to pass the coming winter in Nicopolis. There were several cities of this name, but the one most likely to have been intended by St. Paul (Tit. iii. 22) is the well-known city in Epirus, built near the scene of the battle of Actium. This was the opinion of St. Jerome. Thither he arranged that Titus was to come to him, and he would send either Artemas or Tychicus to undertake in his stead the care of the Churches of Crete. We do not know from what place the Apostle wrote his letter to Titus. It was probably written before he reached Nicopolis, and it may have been sent either from Ephesus, or from some town in Macedonia, as Paul crossed towards Epirus. But if the intention of wintering there was carried out, he must afterwards have come again towards Philippi, and have crossed the *Ægean* once more. For we find that he visited Troas (2 Tim. iv. 13), where, in the care of Carpus, he left his cloak and books and parchments. From the fact of these things, which must have been specially precious to St. Paul, being left there, some have thought it probable that at Troas, from some cause or other, the Apostle was seized by the authorities, and that

here began the second period of imprisonment which was ended only by his death. If this be true, it is not unlikely that he was sent on to Ephesus, as the chief city of Asia, and at this time may have occurred those services of Onesiphorus to which Paul alludes with such gratitude (2 Tim. i. 18), and of which Timothy was a witness. At Ephesus he may have felt constrained once more to appeal to the Imperial power as his only hope of justice. For to Rome he was carried as a prisoner (2 Tim. i. 16, 17) and thither from some cause Onesiphorus came afterwards, and searching out the imprisoned Apostle, repeated the kind attentions which he had bestowed before, and was brave enough to do so, though to sympathize now with Paul was not so free from peril as it had been in his first imprisonment. And the danger had its effect on those who were round about St. Paul. In his second letter to Timothy, written from Rome, entreating him to come speedily thither, we have a gloomy catalogue of defections. "Thou knowest," he writes (2 Tim. i. 15), "that all that are in Asia turned away from me, of whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes." And again (2 Tim. iv. 10), "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world." Then the needs of the Churches

appear to have called Crescens from Rome into Galatia, and Titus, who had been replaced in Crete by Artemas, was now gone into Dalmatia, and Tychicus was sent to Ephesus. "Only Luke is with me," writes the prisoner, to whom sympathy and companionship must have been as the breath of his nostrils. "Take Mark," he adds, "and bring him with thee." But it was not a selfish wish that prompted the injunction; for he proceeds to say, "he is profitable to me for the ministry." The way by which St. Paul himself had come this time to Rome was through Miletus (2 Tim. iv. 20), where Trophimus was obliged to be left behind because he was sick, and at Corinth the Apostle's party was still further lessened by the staying there of Erastus. Probably by the same way Timothy would travel, if he was able to come to Rome, as we can hardly doubt he would strive to do. But of that we are not told. We only know that when the second letter was sent to him, the Apostle's case had been partly heard (2 Tim. iv. 16) and that on his first defence no one took his part, but all forsook him. "But the Lord," he exclaims, "stood by me and strengthened me, and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion." What Paul meant by the last words we cannot say with certainty. But

the letter shews us that he was still a prisoner, and the relief which he had experienced was but for a short time. We have nothing but tradition to tell us how he died, yet that is unvarying in the record that he never was freed from his second prison, but was beheaded during the reign of Nero.

(a) *The First Epistle to Timothy.*

AS was to be expected, the contents of these letters exhibit much similarity. In the first Epistle to Timothy, after the salutation, the Apostle turns at once to the reason for his leaving his friend at Ephesus. Certain men there were teaching a different doctrine, giving heed to fables and endless genealogies. The allusion here, as we see by the mention of the law in a subsequent verse (i. 8), is to the traditions which the Jews had grafted upon the written law, and to which they attached more importance than to the Divine Word itself. Thus they used the law unlawfully. Instead of such teaching, the presiding pastor is to proclaim that the end of the charge is love out of a pure heart and a good conscience and faith unfeigned. With further words about the teachers of error, and a devout thanksgiving for his own call from his

life as a persecutor of the people of the Lord, to be a minister of Christ, Paul proceeds to the details of the charge which he has committed to Timothy. First he inculcates the necessity of constant public prayer to be made for all conditions of men, he gives directions about the behaviour of women in the public services, checking<sup>1</sup> that tendency to prominence which seems to have made itself apparent in many of the women in the early Christian congregations. He next describes the character of those who would be true overseers or deacons in the Church of Christ, as well as of those women helpers in holy things, of whom the early Church made such abundant use. Again he turns to warning against the false teachers and those who go after them, those who in a Judaizing spirit insist on outward observances more than inward holiness, laying more stress on asceticism and mortification of the flesh than

<sup>1</sup> "She shall be saved in childbearing" (ii. 15). These words would be clearer if we read "*through* childbearing." If women did their duty in that which is pre-eminently their work, as mothers in the care of their children, this should be their way of winning salvation. But in the Greek there is a larger allusion, "She shall be saved through *the* childbearing," *i.e.* through the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ, woman thus being brought into closest union with the Messiah at His birth.



on a pure conscience. From this he passes to a series of directions for Timothy's own guidance in his study and in his behaviour towards old and young, both men and women ; gives orders about the regulation of those widows who were engaged in religious works, about the character and duties of elders, and how they shall be chosen ; about slaves and their behaviour towards Christian masters, on which subject the false teachers appear to have inculcated lessons of rebellion. Of such teaching St. Paul speaks with much severity. He then turns to the ~~mild~~ <sup>middle</sup> ~~classes~~ <sup>classes</sup>, whom he exhorts to contentment, and to the rich, whom he warns against the evils of covetousness. After once more alluding to the false teachers and their unworthy motives, he exhorts Timothy to prove himself a good soldier and a faithful servant of Christ, to give special charge to the rich, that they use their wealth so that by good works they may lay up for themselves a good foundation against the time to come. And then the letter closes with a solemn injunction, " Timothy, keep that which is committed unto thee ;" and it is against the profane and vain babblings and oppositions of that knowledge which is falsely so called that this parting warning is specially given.

(b) *The Epistle to Titus.*

THE Epistle to Titus<sup>1</sup> opens with an address more full than usual, after which it deals briefly with directions for the appointment of elders and bishops, who must be men of blameless character and also able to set forth the sound doctrine, and to convict gainsayers, of whom there was no lack in Crete; mainly such as gave heed to Jewish fables and the commandments of men. The second chapter contains exhortations to continue in the sound doctrine, points out what should be the behavior of the old and of the young, how servants should be in subjection all the more because they are Christians. These were to be the themes on which Titus was to speak earnestly to his people, also to enforce obedience to all that were in authority, and to warn against offences of the tongue, in which they had once indulged, but which

<sup>1</sup> Titus seems to have been first brought into connection with St. Paul at Antioch, from which place he accompanied the Apostle to Jerusalem (Gal. ii. 1). He appears to have taken part in the mission to Galatia, and he was afterwards with St. Paul at Ephesus, from whence he was sent to Corinth. He was also at a later time in Macedonia, then left as president of the Church in Crete, and is last heard of as sent into Dalmatia (2 Tim. iv. 10).

were unfit for those who had the promise of eternal life. Faith, too, must be attended by good works ; and foolish questions, genealogies, and strivings about the law are to be avoided. With some parting personal information and directions, and a final exhortation that those who are "ours," that is, of the Christian body, should maintain good works, the letter closes with a very brief salutation and benediction.

*(c) The Second Epistle to Timothy*

THE second letter to Timothy was written from a Roman prison, when the Apostle was yearning for the presence of his younger fellow-labourer. After the salutation comes a thanksgiving, followed by an expression of intense longing that Timothy should come to him. Paul had known his faith, built up in him by the teaching of a holy mother and grandmother. This gift the Apostle urges him to keep alive, and without shame to testify of the Gospel of Christ. Though himself a prisoner for the cause, he urges Timothy to be still steadfast therein, and then tells how others have fallen away, though the love of Onesiphorus has been a comfort amid all these trials. "But do thou," he continued, "be strong, endure hardness,

prove thyself a good soldier of Christ, with whom if we would reign, we must also expect to suffer. Let all men see that thy work is approved unto God, and avoid strifes about words and vain babblings which some indulging in have taught that the resurrection is already past." Then, with exhortations to avoid youthful lusts and foolish questionings, which befit not the Lord's servant, the Apostle goes on to warn against the evil times that are to come, when men shall abound in vices, being lovers of pleasure and of their own selves more than lovers of God, holding a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof. Timothy had known the doctrine for which Paul had suffered so much. That let him hold fast, in the light of the Holy Scripture, whereby the man of God may be complete, furnished amply for every good work. The closing chapter contains exhortations to earnest preaching and teaching. Evil days are coming when men will not endure sound doctrine. So much the more need that Timothy should prove himself a true Evangelist. The Apostle's own time is drawing to a close. He is ready to be offered. But he longs for Timothy to come to him, for his friends have been called away and some have forsaken him, so that in his prison he has only

Luke as his companion. The charge against him has been once heard, and out of some great peril he has been delivered, as God, he is sure, will ever deliver him. Then, after final greetings and a repeated entreaty, "Do thy diligence to come," the letter ends with a brief blessing.

The objections that have been raised to the genuineness of these Epistles have been already dealt with, but there is one feature of their character on which it appears worth while to dwell. It is noteworthy how in these, his final letters, letters intended specially for the guidance of those who were to be leaders of the Christian Churches when St. Paul was taken away, the prominent portion is that which insists on the necessity and power of a good life. Of doctrine there is very little mention. The errors of the false teachers are condemned, and the precious deposit of true doctrine is alluded to more than once; but the chief way by which false teaching is to be overcome is by the weighty example of a holy life. "Follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness." "Let them which have believed in God be careful to maintain good works." "Denying ungodliness and worldly lusts we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world." Such are the final precepts,

the results of the life's experience of St. Paul. To influence others no teaching is equal to the power of a holy example ; to combat false doctrine and selfish worldliness, the best weapon is a conduct before all men void of offence. "The end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience and of faith unfeigned " (1 Tim. i. 5).

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS.

THIS Epistle is unique among the writings of the New Testament, inasmuch as we have in it no indication who the writer was, nor even that he was an Apostle, nor to what Church the letter was addressed. That there is something to be said for the Pauline authorship may be assumed, seeing that in the Revised Version it is still called "the Epistle of Paul the Apostle," but we shall find that the earliest traditions went counter to this opinion. Perhaps the best way of approaching the subject will be to notice what is said in the letter itself about those to whom it was sent. They were persons who had received the Gospel message of salvation, not from the Lord Himself, but from those who heard it from Him (ii. 3); and in their midst signs and wonders and gifts of the Holy Ghost had confirmed the truth of what was preached unto them (ii. 4). The writer calls them (iii. 1), "holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling,"



but at the same time (iii. 14), warns them against "an evil heart of unbelief" whereby they might "fall away from the living God," and he speaks more than once of a need of perseverance (iv. 1, 2), and of "holding fast the confession" of the faith which they had made (iv. 14; x. 23). They were clearly in no good spiritual condition; for he addresses them (v. 11) as "dull of hearing," and goes on to say that whereas "by reason of the time" (*i.e.* since they first heard and accepted the Gospel) "they ought to be teachers, they nevertheless have need themselves to be taught again, yea, even the very first principles of the oracles of God." They seem to have forgotten, or to have been in danger of forgetting (vi. 1-3), the elementary lessons of repentance and faith, and those simple truths of the Christian religion which are embraced in a baptismal creed. Indeed, the solemn language of the writer (vi. 6) appears to be directed against a grievous impending apostasy. It had not come, but he was in fear of it. He adds, however, "We are persuaded better things of you, and things that are near unto salvation, though we thus speak." They had worked for God, he knew; they had shewn love toward His name, yea, their ministrations to the saints were still continued (vi. 10). But they needed

to have marshalled before them the mighty champions of the army of the faithful, that thereby they also might be strengthened to draw near to God in full assurance of faith, remembering the cloud of witnesses by which they were encompassed.

In the early days of their Christian profession (x. 32) they had endured "a great conflict of sufferings," being themselves by their afflictions rendered a gazing-stock, and also made to be sharers in the reproaches heaped on others. They had been spoiled of earthly possessions, but had been able in those first days to bear in mind their better and abiding possession. This boldness now they were almost casting away, and so the Apostle reads them a grand roll of the deeds of others who aforetime had suffered in faith, and had refused to seek any deliverance which God did not send, that so they might attain to a better resurrection. He reminds them too (xii. 4) that their own resistance had not yet extended to the shedding of their blood, while the chastening they had suffered was a sign that they were not forgotten of the Father. We can see from language like this that those addressed were well nigh fainting in the Christian conflict; they had hands that hung down, and knees that were palsied, and

their faltering steps were ready to be turned out of the way. Hence there was sent to them this "word of exhortation" (xiii. 22) by one who was intimately conversant with their condition, its needs and its perils. It might almost be supposed, from a portion of the language used (xii. 15, 16), that there was some one individual who was specially responsible for the condition into which these Christians had been brought, and who is spoken of as a "root of bitterness" and a "profane person like Esau." But of this we cannot be sure; for "the divers and strange teachings" (xiii. 9) may equally apply to the greater portion of the Church, if they had occupied themselves profitlessly in questions about meats. And it is clear that they all needed to be reminded of those first teachers (xiii. 7) that "spake unto them the word of God," and to be pointed to the issue of those lives, and to their faith, which was worthy to be taken as an example.

From the contents of the Epistle, which compares the dispensation under which God spake to men by the prophets, with the latter days in which He has spoken through His Son, which shews the superiority of Christ above Moses, and of the priesthood of Christ above the priesthood under Law, we can see that the

persons addressed were Israelites, who, after having embraced Christianity, were in danger of a relapse into Judaism, but Judaism of such a kind that their state would be worse than if they had never been instructed in the Christian faith. They had learnt enough about Christ's religion to be shaken utterly in their allegiance to the older belief, and if faith in Christ were cast aside, there was nothing to fall back upon, in which they could any longer put their trust, and for this reason it is that the writer speaks in such hopeless language of the state in which their apostasy, if it came to that, would leave them (vi. 6; x. 26-29).<sup>1</sup>

The Epistle, then, is written to the Hebrews. But what Hebrews? They can hardly have been those dwelling in Palestine, for *they* would have heard of Christ while He was on earth, and not merely through the mission of those whom He sent to be His evangelists (ii. 3). And does the Scripture history point us to any country but Italy, where there could be found a congregation of Hebrews who had been exposed

<sup>1</sup> In the two passages to which reference is here made the Apostle is only speaking of what man can do, not of what is possible with God. He sees no power in Christian instruction, given anew, to bring back men who have fallen into the apostasy which he dreads for the Hebrews.

for their faith's sake, at the outset, to sufferings such as the writer of this Epistle mentions? Italy suggests itself too, because in the closing words of the letter we find (xiii. 24), "They of Italy salute you." Such an expression might very fitly be used by one who from Asia or Greece was writing to the Hebrews in Italy, and had about him some few persons who belonged to that land. But it could with equal, perhaps greater, propriety be employed by a writer in Italy addressing a congregation elsewhere. So that all the conclusion we are able to draw thus far is that the persons addressed were most likely resident out of Palestine, and, it may be, were in Rome or in some part of Italy, though that cannot be asserted with confidence.

We may perhaps gain a little light from another quarter. The persons addressed were, it appears, well acquainted with Timothy (xiii. 23), as was also the writer of the letter. Timothy had lately been in prison, but was now set at liberty, and was contemplating a visit to the Hebrews to whom this letter was sent, and in that visit the writer proposes to bear him company. Now there is no place so likely for Timothy to have been imprisoned in as in Rome. If this were the case, then it

would be strange in the Apostle to ask the Christians in Rome or in Italy if they had heard of Timothy's release, for they were sure to have known of it. And the places in which Timothy would have most interest, and would be most likely to visit when set free, so far as we know of his history from the New Testament, would be rather in Macedonia or proconsular Asia, than anywhere in Italy. It may therefore be that the author of this letter is writing from Italy to Macedonia or Asia, and addressing a Hebrew congregation among whom Timothy had laboured, but who did not yet know that he had been set at liberty. To them he very naturally sends the greetings of the Italian Christians among whom he himself was living, and the message about the brother in Christ to whom they were so dear. On the whole, this seems the conclusion which suits best with the small amount of internal evidence supplied by the Epistle. There were probably many societies of Hebrew Christians, both in Macedonia and Asia, to whom the description in the letter might be applied. We know the great struggles and contentions to which St. Paul was subjected in both countries. "Without were fightings, within were fears," he says (2 Cor. vii. 5), when in the one land; and he is

probably thinking of his life in the other when he speaks (1 Cor. xv. 32) of "fighting with beasts at Ephesus." To some unnamed Hebrew-Christian body then, in one of these lands, it may be, that our letter was written.<sup>1</sup>

And who wrote it? Here we are met by a conflict of tradition. The Epistle is first noticed in the Western Church, a fact which favours the conclusion that it was written from Italy. Clement of Rome, who wrote his Epistle to the Corinthians before the close of the first century, quotes from it frequently, but makes no mention of the author, though he evidently considers it of the same value as other portions of the New Testament writings which he uses. After this it is excluded from the list of St. Paul's writings by all the rest of the Western evidence down to the middle of the third century. Thus in the

<sup>1</sup> By reason of the large use in this Epistle of that allegorical and spiritualizing method of exposition of the Old Testament, which flourished so much in later times in Alexandria, it has been suggested that it was to the Jewish Christians in that city that the letter was addressed. The Jews formed a large part of the community there, and we may be sure that as in other places, so in that, the Christian body at first was largely composed of Hebrews. But the allegorical mode of interpretation on which this suggestion is based would be equally well explained if we suppose the writer of the Epistle to have been Apollos the learned Jew of Alexandria.



Canon of Muratori (A.D. 170) thirteen epistles are attributed to St. Paul, of which nine were addressed to Churches, and four to individual Christians; and in reciting the list of the Churches there is no mention of the Hebrews. Similarly of Caius, a Roman presbyter, who lived about A.D. 213, Eusebius (*H. E.*, vi. 20) tells us that he enumerated only thirteen Epistles of St. Paul, omitting that to the Hebrews. The same is reported of his contemporary, Hippolytus; while Irenæus, who, though a native of Asia, was made bishop of Lyons at the commencement of the third century, and so may be counted among Western testimonies, quotes twelve Epistles of St. Paul, omitting that to Philemon, but nowhere refers to the Epistle to the Hebrews. Thus, though known and used very early in the Roman Church and its neighbours, there is no trace there of its ascription to St. Paul.

When we turn to the Churches of North Africa, we are told by Tertullian (A.D. 200) that there existed an Epistle to the Hebrews by Barnabas, and he proceeds<sup>1</sup> at once to quote from it the words of our Epistle (Heb. vi. 4-8). His manner of doing this is such as to shew that the letter from which he makes his extract

<sup>1</sup> *De pudicitia*, 20.

was well known, and therefore the tradition that it was written by Barnabas equally so. Following Tertullian by about fifty years, Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage, though not naming Barnabas as the writer of this letter, speaks expressly of Paul as writing to seven Churches, and among them he does not enumerate the Hebrews. Further, the Old Latin Version of the New Testament, generally in use in Africa in Tertullian's time, did not at first include in its canon the Epistle to the Hebrews, and when it was subsequently added, no author's name was attached to it, and, as Jerome said at a later date, "the custom of the Latins received it not." Thus, when assigned to any author by writers in North Africa, it was never set down as St. Paul's. When we go farther eastward, we find Clement of Alexandria, who died about A.D. 220, quoting the words of "the blessed presbyter," by which it is agreed that he meant his predecessor, Pantænus, to this effect: "Since the Lord, being the Apostle of the Almighty, was sent to the Hebrews, Paul out of modesty, as having been sent to the Gentiles, avoids inscribing himself Apostle of the Hebrews, both because of the reverence due to the Lord, and because it was a work of supererogation in him to write to the Hebrews,

when he was preacher and Apostle to the Gentiles." So far Clement is reporting Pantænus, who clearly held the Epistle to be St. Paul's. But in the very same chapter of Eusebius from which the above quotation is made (*H. E.*, vi. 14) we find Clement's own opinion about the letter given. He, too, says that it was the work of St. Paul ; but evidently feeling that he is bound to account for some difference in the style of it, when compared with the other Pauline letters which have been preserved to us, he adds that it was written to the Hebrews in the Hebrew tongue, and translated into Greek by St. Luke, and hence there is much similarity between its language and expressions and those found in the Acts of the Apostles. At a little later date we have another Alexandrian opinion, viz. that of Origen, who flourished there in the first half of the third century. He ascribes to St. Paul fourteen Epistles, and in them reckons that to the Hebrews, but he adds concerning it (*Eus. H. E.*, vi. 25), "that every one who is competent to judge will admit that the language of this Epistle has not about it that rudeness which St. Paul (2 Cor. xi. 6) himself allowed that there was in his own speech, but that it is written in better Greek ; while everybody would

acknowledge that the thoughts contained in it are wonderful and do not fall behind those in the acknowledged letters of the Apostle." After this he expresses his own opinion: "I should say, then, that the thoughts are those of St. Paul, but that the words and arrangement are due to some one who reported from memory the Apostle's speech, and illustrated, as a commentator, what had been said by his master. If, however," he continues, "any Church hold this letter to be St. Paul's, let it have credit for so doing, for it was not rashly that the men of old time handed it down as St. Paul's. But as to who really wrote the letter, of this God knows the truth; yet there has come down to us one tradition that it was written by Clement, the Bishop of Rome; another, that it was by Luke, who wrote the Gospel and the Acts."

It is clear from Origen's language what he meant when he spake of Luke having written this letter. If he accepted that tradition, he did so only in the sense that the basis of the whole letter was St. Paul's teaching. This Luke, or Clement, had remembered, and cast into shape, and in this sense only was the letter to be taken as their composition. But the gradual change in these Alexandrian judgments is very noteworthy. They are given by men

than whom few were better qualified to judge of a Greek style, and each holds less firmly than his predecessor to the opinion that the words of this Epistle are St. Paul's own. Pantæus finds a reason why the Apostle did not place his name at the head of it; Clement thinks it a translation from a Hebrew original, and Origen a *précis* of what St. Paul had written or spoken, but that it is given with an expansion, comment, or arrangement which is due to some other person. And to some such conclusion nearly all have come who in recent times have discussed the authorship of the Epistle. It breathes in most parts the spirit of Paul, but in many particulars it differs from the other Epistles, and especially in the arrangement and gradation of its several parts. We miss in it also the parenthetic style of St. Paul, his manner of starting aside at a word to pour out some thought which has been suddenly borne in upon him, while the tone in which a relapse into Judaism is spoken of has lost much of that severity which was engendered of the opposition and enmity under which St. Paul suffered from his own countrymen: there is none of that strong language of condemnation which we find in the Epistle to the Galatians.

It would be possible (and it has been done)

to bring together a long array of words and phrases to which parallels can be found in the acknowledged letters of St. Paul, and an equally large list might be produced of expressions unusual with that Apostle. But such collections prove nothing. All the New Testament writers drew largely from the diction of the LXX., with which they were very familiar, and both the Epistle to the Hebrews and the other Epistles might be shewn to be full of phrases due to the Greek version of the Old Testament. We can therefore come no nearer to answering the question, "Who wrote this Epistle?" than the men of old time came. There is a sense in which the Epistle may be called Pauline, and for that reason probably in the recent revision the title of the Authorized Version was not altered, though it has less MS. authority than the simpler heading, "to the Hebrews." But by him who is first found quoting it, the letter is not ascribed to Paul, nor was it for a long time accepted under his name in Western Christendom, while those who in the East at first held it for his work came at length, from earnest study, to recognize that it was not his in the same sense as the Epistle to the Romans.

At the time of the Reformation, a suggestion was put forward by Luther, that the letter was

written by Apollos, and in recent times this opinion has found able supporters. But Apollos would be in the same class with Luke, or Barnabas, or Clement. His writings would breathe the same tone as those of the Apostle with whom he laboured, and he would draw largely on St. Paul for thoughts and argument. He, like the others, would have lived in a circle where Paul was the moving spirit, and, like them, could speak of Timothy as "our brother." Until, therefore, some means be found of differentiating between these several persons, we must be content to leave the question only partly answered, as Origen did when he wrote, "The truth in the matter God knows."

It was no doubt because the author of the Epistle could not be certainly known that the Epistle to the Hebrews came to be reckoned by Eusebius in the number of *antilegomena*, i.e. books against which some objection had been raised, and which were not at the first included in the canon. It could not be for any other reason, for we have seen that in the first century Clement of Rome quoted from it in the same way as from the books that were accepted by all; while in the East, Justin Martyr, early in the second century, proves by his allusions to it that it was regarded there



as of Apostolic authority in discussions concerning the Christian faith. And when in the fourth century the question of the New Testament canon was definitely discussed and settled by the authority of a Council, this book was on all hands included, although some of the Fathers of that age were careful to make known that the question of its authorship must still remain undecided. And from that time it has continued to be a valued portion of the sacred volume, all men acknowledging its preciousness, though differing often in their judgment of when and where and by whom it was written.

There is but one passage (ix. 1-9) which might seem to give us some help towards fixing the date of the Epistle. There the writer is speaking of the tabernacle, its furniture, and the services therein. But when he comes to verse 6, as if he were carried in thought away from the tabernacle to the temple, he says, according to an accurate translation, "Now these things having been thus prepared, the priests *go in* continually into the first tabernacle." From this use of the present tense, it has been argued that the temple was still standing when this Epistle was written. But the author is speaking merely of what was appointed under the Pentateuchal Law,

and uses "go" to describe what was the rule there laid down, and without reference to his own date in any way. The general colouring of the Epistle warrants us in believing that the temple was still undestroyed, for it would hardly have been possible to discuss the ritual of the temple to such a degree as is here done, without some allusion to the overthrow of the Holy City, had that event been already in the past. It is part of the writer's argument that the Mosaic and Levitical institutions were to be superseded, and he would surely have pointed to the temple ruins, had they been there, to emphasize his position by the teachings of history. We may conclude, then, that the date of the Epistle to Hebrews is perhaps a year or two before the capture of Jerusalem.

The contents of this Epistle are arranged with a more definite plan than is to be seen in those which we know as Pauline Epistles. The writer has one end in view. He is addressing persons in danger of falling back from Christianity into Judaism, from which he had once thought them to have been set free. He therefore displays before them the greater glory of the Christian covenant. He states his theme at the very outset. God in old times spake to the fathers in the prophets, but now in the end

of these days He has spoken to us in His Son. And this new revelation is above the old, because (1) He through whom it is given has become "better than the angels." On this the writer dwells in chapters i. and ii. Then he sets forth (2) that Christ "has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses," the chief minister of God for the giving of the older covenant. This point of the argument extends from iii. 1 to iv. 13; after which he goes on to shew (3) that Christ hath "obtained a more excellent ministry" than the priests who were under the law, seeing that "He is the mediator of a better covenant, enacted upon better promises." This, the longest section of his argument, extends from iv. 14 to xii. 29. Each of these divisions comprises some special exhortation arising out of the point with which it deals; and (4) the Epistle then closes with a chapter (xiii.) devoted to the enforcement of various Christian duties. The whole reasoning of the Epistle may be summarized thus:—

I. Christ whom the Apostle describes as "the effulgence of God's glory, and the very image of His substance," is made so much higher than the angels, through whose ministry the older covenant was revealed,<sup>1</sup> and who were the fore-

<sup>1</sup> Of the Jewish tradition that the law was delivered by

most of God's servants under that dispensation, as the name and position of a Son is beyond that of messengers and ministering spirits. This has been set forth in the Scriptures from of old, and specially in the revelations made to David and his house. For the Son is proclaimed to be a king, whose Divine throne endureth for ever, and whom all the angels are bidden to worship. It behoves us therefore to give more earnest heed to the new revelation made known to us by Him, unto which God has borne witness by the signs and wonders which He wrought through those who were the first preachers of this message. Now in this later dispensation it is God's purpose to raise mankind, at first made subject to the angels, to a place and dignity far above theirs. This is not yet done. But in Christ we have the pledge that it shall be; for He took man's nature, He has shared man's subjection, and is now raised to glory and power over the world to come.<sup>1</sup> And to this exaltation He attained by suffering and death. He is crowned angels, there are other notices in the New Testament. Cf. Acts vii. 53; Gal. iii. 19; Heb. ii. 3.

<sup>1</sup> "The world to come whereof we speak" (ii. 5), signifies the same as "that city which is to come" (xiii. 14), and the "better and abiding possession" (x. 34), and "the kingdom that cannot be shaken" (xii. 28).

because He has died. And it was for men that He underwent this pain. He who is the Author of salvation to mankind was made perfect through suffering. And in Christ all who are sanctified by Him become sons of God,<sup>1</sup> and so heirs with Him of glory, for which reason they are named His brethren. That they might be so, Christ gave His help to flesh and blood,<sup>2</sup> and by His death destroyed him that had the power of death, and freed mankind from fear and bondage. Thus is He fitted to be a merciful High Priest, and since He has been tempted, He can succour those who are tempted.

II. Christ has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses; for Christ is a Son *over* the house of God, that is, the company of the faithful, while Moses was but a servant *within* it. For we are Christ's household if we fall not away from the faith. Now the fate of Israel under the first covenant should warn us who are under the new dispensation. They did not enter into God's rest, because they held not

<sup>1</sup> "He that sanctifieth (*viz.* Christ) and they that are sanctified are all of one" (ii. 11), *i.e.* they have all one Father.

<sup>2</sup> ii. 16. The Revised Version gives, "Not of angels doth He take hold, but He taketh hold of the seed of Abraham." The whole idea implied is the assuming of humanity that He might thus be able to help mankind.

fast their faith. And now the words, "To-day if ye will hear His voice," are spoken to us through the Son, and a day of grace is fixed for us as for ancient Israel. Let us then beware of unbelief. Let us exhort each other unto faithfulness, for by faith it is that we are made partakers of Christ. Harken to the lesson taught by Israel's fall. They provoked and angered God, so that He swore in His wrath that they should not enter into His rest. This they did from want of faith. They might have entered, but did not. Yet God would have some to enter in. He has therefore made a new covenant, and fixed for us a new "to-day." This He did in David, long after Joshua's<sup>1</sup> time, which shews us that Israel had not found the rest under their first leader and mediator. The words, then, "To-day if ye will enter," refer now to the new covenant. Let us therefore strive to enter in; let us beware of unbelief, for the Word of God, like God Himself, will try our hearts, and make it clear if we be not faithful.

III. Christ has obtained a more excellent

<sup>1</sup> "If Jesus had given them rest" (iv. 8, A.V.). *Jesus* and *Joshua* are the same name. But it is better to use the Old Testament form in this passage and in Acts vii. 45, to avoid confusion.

ministry than those who were priests under the old law. He possesses indeed all the qualifications of those priests, He can feel for and with those who suffer and wander astray. But He is without sin, and in this He is more excellent than they. And He has not taken the office upon Himself, but has been appointed thereto by God. Also He is better than the priests of old, in that He is a priest after the order of Melchizedek. "But," says the Apostle, "for such teaching as I would give you concerning this priesthood ye are become dull of hearing, ye need to begin again the lessons of the Christian faith. Yet I will not think of you as utterly gone backward, I will not go over again with you the first steps. Surely ye have not fallen back into that former state from which ye had been raised,<sup>1</sup> and into which if ye sink once more ye will be in worse case than if ye had never advanced beyond it. For ye will be like that land which, after having drunk in the rain from heaven, bringeth forth not

<sup>1</sup> The expression (vi. 5) "tasted the good word of God and the powers of the world to come," means that these Hebrew Christians had found God's promises to be sure, and had received of those spiritual gifts which were at first shed on the Christian Church, but which truly belong only to the age that is to come, the kingdom of Christ in the future.



profitable fruit, but briers and thorns, and so is worthless and nigh unto cursing. But I will not think thus of you. Ye did shew forth good fruits of faith, ye were true followers of those who inherit God's promises—promises which cannot fail, for they are confirmed by God's own oath. I will therefore speak to you of this great High Priest after the order of Melchizedek; for Melchizedek, king of peace and righteousness, is a priest for ever, and the silence of God's Word about his generation or his death makes him in a figure to be a foreshadowing of Christ. He was greater than the priests of Aaron's house; for Abraham, the father of the whole race of Israel, paid tithes to Melchizedek, and received from him a blessing. And it is the less who takes a blessing from the greater. Such an eternal High Priest is Jesus, neither is He after the line of Aaron. But the introduction of a priest not sprung from Levi<sup>1</sup> implies that the Levitical covenant is at an end. And this new High Priest is more excellent too, in that he does not die, as did the priests of old, nor is He changed; and thus He is fit to be the author of *eternal* salvation to those who are made His people by the

<sup>1</sup> Jesus, to whom the Messianic prophecy of Ps. cx. applies, was of the tribe of Judah.

new covenant. For the law of Moses, with its temple, its priests and sacrifices, was only an imperfect shadow of the new covenant, the eternal and availing atonement of Christ. And the character of our High Priest is, that He is holy, guileless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens.

“And He is the minister of no earthly tabernacle, while His covenant is better than the old. The first covenant was not faultless; this God Himself hath declared. The better promises of Christ’s covenant are, that God’s law shall be written in the hearts of men, and that the promises shall no longer be limited to one people, but all men shall be drawn to know, obey, and love the Lord. Moreover, the ordinances of the first covenant were an earthly tabernacle, priests who went in often, while the High Priest alone went into the Holiest once a year, and must make atonement for himself as well as for the people. Under the new covenant the true tabernacle is heaven itself; thither Christ has entered in once for all, and in sign of an accomplished work He sitteth evermore at God’s right hand. He needs not to offer for Himself, but for us presents His own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption.

“For Christ as our High Priest has suffered

death, and by this offering has put away sin. Thus His covenant, which makes us heirs, may be called a testament,<sup>1</sup> and His death hath redeemed the transgressions that were under the first covenant. This the old law could not do. Those sacrifices did not, could not, make perfect. But Christ's was a perfect and perfecting offering. He then need not offer often, for God hath by promise accepted His sacrifice once for all, having said, 'Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.'

"Having then such a High Priest, let us hold fast and use the privileges of the new dispensation. Let us draw near to God, be firm in faith, and grow in love and in good works. Let us not, even amid persecution, withdraw from the assembling of the congregation to worship. For the day of Christ is drawing near. Otherwise we shall merit God's vengeance, for we shall have sinned wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth.<sup>2</sup> Remember then

<sup>1</sup> *I.e.* it may be so styled because its force and validity come through the *death* of Christ, the High Priest of the covenant, in the same way as an inheritance comes to the heirs through the death of the testator.

<sup>2</sup> The very strong language used in these verses (x. 26-31) is meant to check these Hebrews in their tendency to apostatize. The Apostle points out that it will be of no use to offer them again the lessons against which

your former days in which ye were content, nay joyful, amid suffering, and do not cast away your confidence, for soon Christ will come and ye shall inherit the promises."

Then, to animate the hearts of these fainting Hebrews, the writer lays before them the glorious roll of God's faithful servants in the times of old, and afterwards appeals to them that they should imitate these noble deeds ; and if they be called upon to suffer much, still to look unto Christ, who endured even the shame of a death upon the cross. Let them remember, too, he continues, that God-sent trials are true fatherly chastisement, and should bring forth fruits of righteousness and peace and confirmation in the faith. For to us a revelation has not been made with terrors like those of Sinai, but we have come near to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God.

"See then that ye refuse not Him that speaketh. For His voice hath shaken all the former things, which are passed away, for they were perishable ; and all things shall be so shaken, except the heavenly kingdom, which is offered

they have sinned. The ordinary means of God's grace will have been spurned, and they must then be left to God's own hand. They will have despised the sacrifice once offered, and there is no other that can save from sin.

by Christ. Seek then for grace to serve God with reverence and godly fear."

IV. The concluding chapter contains exhortations of various kinds, to brotherly love, to hospitality, to kindness of heart, to chastity, to liberality, and to contentment such as they may have who rest on God's promises. The Apostle urges, too, that the Hebrews should have in mind the lessons, the lives and ends of those who first instructed them in the faith, and thus, remembering that Jesus Christ changeth not, they may avoid strange doctrines. And let them not go back to seek strength in the discarded observances of Judaism, doctrines which dealt with clean and unclean meats. Let their sacrifice be one of praise and thanksgiving offered on Christ as the altar, through Christ as the priest, and pleading Christ's blood as the sacrifice; for the sacrifices of the tabernacle have not profited those who have been occupied in them.<sup>1</sup> He also urges on them obedience

<sup>1</sup> The connection in these difficult verses (xiii. 9-14) seems to be of this kind. "Fall not back on Jewish ritual observances, but seek to be established by grace. For they who are still in bondage to the ritual of the law can have no part at our altar, the cross of Christ. And this was prefigured by the acts of the great day of atonement. That day's sacrifice spake most directly of Christ, and it was not eaten, but altogether burnt without the camp

to their present leaders, asks for their prayers on his own behalf, and commends them to the keeping of the God of peace. Then, with an expression of hope that they would bear with this word of exhortation from him, a mention of Timothy's release, and the salutations of those of Italy, the letter concludes, leaving us uncertain still who its writer may have been, though few seem more fitted to have sent it forth than that Jew of Alexandria, learned and mighty in the Scriptures, Apollos, who, after being taught the way of God more fully by Aquila and Priscilla, became acknowledged by St. Paul as a worthy waterer of what the great Apostle himself had been permitted to plant.

the blood only being presented as an offering. This foreshadowed the abolition of laws about meats, and pointed on to Christ, whose blood was shed, for the sanctification of His people, outside Jerusalem. Let us go forth then to Him, away from what speaks of Judaism and its ritual, glorying in our altar though it be the shameful cross. Thus may we shew that we are looking for a home beyond this world, and offer through Christ our praise and thanksgiving continually."

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE CATHOLIC EPISTLES.

THE name "Catholic" has been given from early times to those Epistles in the New Testament which bear the names of James, Peter, John, and Jude. They are seven in number, and are called "Catholic" because they are mainly addressed, not to individuals or particular Churches, but generally to the whole Christian body, or to the Christians of an extensive district. Thus, St. James writes to "the twelve tribes of the Dispersion;" St. Peter to "the Dispersion" in a wide district of Asia Minor; while St. John's first Epistle may be looked upon as a legacy to the Church at large, whom the beloved disciple in his closing years might fitly address as his "little children."

#### (a) *The Epistle of St. James.*

First among these Epistles in our English Bibles stands that of St. James, which is probably the work of that James who is called in



the Gospels "the Lord's brother." The four persons who are so called were most likely the children of Joseph, the Virgin Mary's husband, by a former wife. This James was bishop of Jerusalem (cf. Gal. i. 19, with Gal. ii. 9, 12), and presided over the Christian Church, in its earliest days (Acts xii. 17 ; xv. 13 ; xxi. 18), and therefore must have continued to reside in Jerusalem when the Apostles had gone forth on their missionary labours. Now the writer of the Epistle was so well known that he only needs to begin his letter, "James . . . to the twelve tribes." This is an opening such as would be written by the first acknowledged head of the Christian community, and hardly by any other. Again, the writer does not call himself an Apostle. Now it is stated that for a long time after the list of the Apostles was complete our Lord's brethren "did not believe on Him" (John vii. 5), and when they are mentioned after the Ascension (Acts i. 14), they are severed from the Apostolic body, and placed last in the enumeration, as if they were the last who had become disciples. The change in their opinions had been thought by many to be accounted for by the statement of St. Paul (1 Cor. xv. 7), that Jesus after His resurrection "was seen of James." Such a

vision it is supposed brought conviction to the doubter, who, in the Apocryphal "Gospel according to the Hebrews," is said to have been inclined to believe even before the Crucifixion. We can well understand why this James did not name himself "the Lord's brother" in his letter, first, because he would feel that his unbelief made him unworthy of the title, and next, because he, as also his brother St. Jude, would have no wish to use a name which might seem to claim for them a nearer place to Jesus than was held by any of the twelve. Eusebius (*H. E.*, ii. 23) tells us that this James who had earned from all men the title of "the Just," was martyred by the Jews, being cast down from a pinnacle of the temple, and killed by blows from a fuller's club after his fall.<sup>1</sup>

The Epistle is addressed to the "Dispersion." This word was used in New Testament times to signify the Jewish population scattered away from the Holy Land. And when the writer calls them "the twelve tribes," we see that he writes to those who had been converts from Judaism. To them their ancient faith was still of high importance, indeed of somewhat more

<sup>1</sup> The martyrdom of St. James took place shortly after the end of the procuratorship of Festus, about A.D. 61 or 62.

importance than it ought to have been. This explains why St. James' Epistle partakes so largely of the character of the preaching of John the Baptist, and of our Lord's earliest teaching in the Sermon on the Mount. He is writing to Jews not yet alive to the full meaning of faith in Christ, and he strives to stimulate the converts to a higher standard of Christian practice, warning them specifically in a large section of the letter (i. 22-ii. 26) against the danger which beset Jewish Christians of trusting to a faith which produced no results in the form of Christian love.

But it was not only for those at a distance that the Epistle was written. It bears internal evidence that it was addressed to those who were involved in sufferings at home. "Count it all joy when ye fall into manifold temptations," is the opening language, and the writer returns to the same topic at its close. Now if written from Jerusalem, by the Bishop there, in times included within the history of the Acts of the Apostles, such language suits best with that persecution of the Church by Herod Agrippa I., in which that other James, the Apostle and brother of John, was put to death. And it is an additional indication that the Epistle was written about that time, that in it

there is no word of that contention, on the question of circumcision, which soon afterwards agitated the whole Christian Church in Syria, and about which James the Bishop pronounced a decision in A.D. 51. It seems most reasonable therefore to place the date of this Epistle about midway between A.D. 44, the time of Herod's persecution, and A.D. 51, when the synod of Jerusalem was held; and as all tradition tells us that James did not leave the Holy City, we may assume that Jerusalem was the place of its writing.

In the times of Eusebius (A.D. 325) this Epistle was reckoned among those writings not fully accepted by the Church, yet we find it quoted long before in the writings of Clement of Rome, and it is included in the Peshito Syriac Version of the New Testament. Origen quotes from it; as does Dionysius of Alexandria (A.D. 245), and at the Council of Laodicea (A.D. 363) it was authoritatively included among the canonical books. So that although not so widely circulated as some portions of the New Testament, the result probably of its practical rather than doctrinal character, there is no reason to doubt its authenticity. That the nature of its contents might gain it little acceptance was seen in the case of Luther, who

styled it "a veritable epistle of straw," because he imagined that it went counter to St. Paul's teaching of justification by faith, forgetting that the failings and needs of those to whom it was sent account sufficiently for the way in which St. James insists that "faith without works is dead," a doctrine which St. Paul would have maintained as stoutly under the same conditions.

Immediately after the address, the writer turns at once to the subject of his letter. Be patient (he urges) under afflictions, and to attain thereunto ask in faith for wisdom from God. It is because men have not faith, that their requests are not answered, and want of faith shews itself in undue regard to worldly things.<sup>1</sup> Those who fail in trial must not charge God with the blame. God's gifts come from above.<sup>2</sup> When He sends trials, they are to make of men an offering meet for Himself. Such should be

<sup>1</sup> i. 9, 10. The brother of low degree is to rejoice in that he is exalted and taken into the brotherhood of Christ, the rich is likewise to rejoice because his Christian faith has brought him unto true humility.

<sup>2</sup> i. 19. "No variableness, neither shadow of turning." The figure is taken from a tropical sun which shines directly downward, and casts no shadow. God is like this, He is never in the shadow, nor can any be in the shadow from Him.

teachable, patient, and should not trust in hearing which is not followed by doing. Respect of persons is another form of the same evil, to indulge which is to be unlike God and to forget the royal law. Faith without works is the faith of devils, not like that of Abraham and Rahab, which bore fruit in action. Then the desire of many to be teachers<sup>1</sup> is alien to the teachable spirit. The tongue is a great evil, harder to tame than anything else, and to use it for cursing and blessing alike is as unnatural as for a tree to bring forth two kinds of fruit, or for the same spring to give two kinds of water.

The truly wise shews his wisdom in his good life, while jealousy and faction have no part in the wisdom that is from above. Discord in the world comes from the pursuit of pleasures, and from covetousness which alienates men from God. He chooses the humble, the pure, and the penitent. These God will exalt. Men should avoid evil-speaking, refrain from plans about the distant future, for life is but a vapour. Rich men, who trust in riches, shall find them a devouring fire. The last times are close at hand. Let those who look for the Lord be patient. Avoid rash oaths. In affliction pray,

<sup>1</sup> iii. 1. "Be not many masters." *Rev. Ver.*, "Be not many teachers."

in joy sing praises. In sickness seek unto the Lord as well as unto physicians, for now, as of old, prayer is mighty. Strive to win sinners from their way, so shall their sins and yours also be covered.

*(b) The First Epistle of St. Peter.*

CONCERNING the first Epistle of St. Peter, there was never any question raised in the early Church. It has always been received for what it claims to be, the writing of the principal member of the Apostolic band. It is only in modern times that some, who represent the differences between Peter and Paul to have been as great as the forged writings of the second century picture them, have conceived it impossible that Peter could have written anything so entirely in harmony as this letter is with the writings of the great Apostle of the Gentiles. But to accept this opinion we must ignore all the testimony of antiquity. We have evidence that the Epistle was known and accepted by Clement of Rome, Polycarp, Theophilus, Irenæus, Clement of Alexandria, and Tertullian, while Origen testifies that its authority had never been disputed. In the face of such an array of early testimony, no amount of modern



criticism can avail to throw discredit on its genuineness and authenticity, seeing further that the heretic Marcion rejected it from his list of Scripture but did so on the ground that it *was* written by St. Peter.

In the closing verses of the Epistle, the Apostle writes, sending the greeting of her (*i.e.* the Church) "that is in Babylon." By reason of this expression much argument has been used to prove that St. Peter wrote this letter from Babylon in Chaldæa, but there is no evidence to shew that the Apostle ever visited that city, or that in his time there was a Christian Church there, while the use of this name for Rome can be shewn to have been common among Jewish writers. It is therefore more probable that the Apostle was in Rome when he wrote, where he is much more likely to have had Silas at hand for his messenger, and Mark for his companion, than in the veritable Babylon.

And the time when the letter was written must be fixed at some date, when the Christians in Asia, to the Churches of which it is addressed, had become objects of persecution. This can hardly have been the case before A.D. 64, the year in which Nero laid the blame of the burning of Rome to their charge, an accusation which would make enemies for them wherever

the Roman power extended. This date, or a little later, is the time favoured by internal evidence also ; for the writer is acquainted with some of St. Paul's letters (*e.g.* the Epistle to the Ephesians) which were not in existence much before ; while, though writing, as we believe, from Rome, he does not mention St. Paul, because, about a year before, the Apostle of the Gentiles had been released from his imprisonment, and was gone on those journeys to Philippi, Ephesus and elsewhere, which in the Epistles of the Captivity he had spoken of making. But as neither Apostle lived long after A.D. 64, we ought not to date this letter more than a year after that time.

The Epistle is intended primarily, as the address shews, for Jewish Christians, probably because St. Peter knew more of them ; but it is sent to Churches in which St. Paul had also laboured, and was well known, and there is no word in the teaching it contains which cannot be profitably applied both by Gentile and Jew. And it is this feature of the Epistle alone which has made those who will insist on seeing hostility between the teaching of Peter and Paul impugn its genuineness.

After the salutation the letter deals first, with the value, joy and blessedness of the Christian

revelation, in a spirit of deep thankfulness for all the comforts and the glories of the gospel-message, that message of salvation which the prophets foretold, though they were not conscious of the full meaning of all that the Spirit revealed through their ministry. From this it passes to exhortation unto a sober and holy life, befitting those who are called by Christ. For they are intended to be a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people ; therefore all guile and malice must be put away from them. And the times in which they are living make it all the more needful that the conversation of Christians should be such as, by its faultlessness, to silence gainsayers. Therefore they must submit to all lawful authority, knowing that rulers are sent by God. Nay, more, even if they suffer undeservedly, they are to take it patiently, remembering that their Master suffered in like wise. The writer next turns to speak of the duties of wives and husbands, and then of the mutual kind offices which should abound among the whole Christian society. He exhorts them to be armed with the same mind which was in Christ. He suffered for the sins of others, Himself being free from sin. But being put to death in the flesh He was quickened in the Spirit. So Chris-

tians may die to sin, and they should strive so to do. For the end of all things is at hand. Men should therefore be sober, and watch unto prayer, should foster charity and liberality, and should make a right use of all their gifts, that God may be glorified in them all. Neither let them faint at suffering, if only they suffer in the cause of Christ, but let them commit their souls to God's keeping.

Then with words of exhortation to elder and younger, and with an invocation of God's grace upon them all, the letter ends, having only a notice that Silvanus is to be the bearer of it, and that Mark is the Apostle's companion and joins with the Church in Babylon in Christian greetings.

*(c) The Second Epistle of St. Peter.*

THE second Epistle of St. Peter, though included, at the council of Laodicæa, among the canonical books, was not generally accepted in the early Church. Eusebius (A.D. 325) says of it, "that which is circulated as his (St. Peter's) second Epistle, we have received to be not canonical." Yet of its early existence there is no doubt. Passing over the allusions which seem to be made to it by Clement of Rome and Theophilus of Antioch (A.D. 170), we find

certain notice of it by Clement of Alexandria, by Hippolytus, Bishop of Portus, by Firmilian, Bishop of Cæsarea, and by Origen, all before A.D. 250. We may therefore be sure that it was not without authority that it was included in the canon in A.D. 363.

Turning to the Epistle itself, we find the writer calls himself Symeon<sup>1</sup> Peter, an Apostle of Jesus Christ. He says (iii. 1) he is the author of a previous Epistle addressed to the same persons to whom this is sent. He calls himself an old man (i. 14) whose death cannot be far off, and claims an old man's right of exhortation. The language and illustrations shew that he was a Jew, and he asserts in most solemn terms that he was a witness of the Transfiguration.<sup>2</sup> We can hardly believe that a writer making such declarations, in a letter directed against false teachers, can himself (as modern critics suggest) have been guilty of a deliberate forgery.

Now the destination of this second Epistle

<sup>1</sup> See margin of A.V. The same spelling of the name is found Acts xv. 14.

<sup>2</sup> The language of the original in this section (i. 13-18) contains many parallelisms and allusions to the accounts of the Transfiguration which cannot be brought out by a translation, but which are strong evidence that the writer of the Epistle was one who had been present on that occasion.

may very well have been the same as the first ; for both appeal to a body of Christians of whom a large number must have been converts from Judaism, both make some use as well of Old Testament illustrations as of Jewish oral tradition, both are addressed to readers who must have known St. Paul's Epistles, and have been known to the friends of that Apostle,<sup>1</sup> while both bespeak the author's intimate knowledge of those whom he addresses, and his kindly interest in all their concerns and welfare.

Moreover, the writer of both letters looked for the near approach of the end of this world, in both he teaches that prophecy does not bear with it its own interpretation, in both he dwells on the small number of persons saved at the Deluge, in both we find the same sentiments on the nature and right use of Christian liberty, and on the value of prophecy.

Once more, in both letters we find a like use of figurative words, such as in 1 Peter, where in i. 13, the writer speaks of "girding up" the loins of the mind, and, ii. 15, of "muzzling" for putting men to silence ; in ii. 16, of a "veil," not a material one, but of maliciousness ; in ii. 20, of men "slapped with the hand," who are buffeted for faults ; in iv. 1, of "putting on the

<sup>1</sup> Cf. 1 Pet. v. 12, 13, and 2 Pet. iii. 15, 16.

armour" of mental resolution. Like these, in 2 Peter we have (i. 9) a man "winking tight his eyes" for him that cannot see afar off; in i. 13, 14, we read of the body as a "tabernacle;" of mental slumbering (ii. 3) we have the word "to nod" in sleep; in iii. 16, those who wrest the Scriptures are pictured as "putting them on the rack." And both these lists might be largely increased, while in both letters alike there are found a great many words of unique character occurring in these two Epistles, and nowhere else in the New Testament, and these remarkable words not the same in both the letters. Further, when we compare this second Epistle with the acknowledged words of St. Peter in the Acts, we have, among others, the following striking resemblances. The expression, "day of the Lord," is found only in Acts ii. 20, and 2 Peter iii. 10, and once in St. Paul's Epistles (1 Thess. v. 2); but the two passages first quoted will be seen to have much other similarity in diction. St. Peter uses "wages of iniquity" concerning Judas (Acts i. 18), and the same phrase is found twice in the Epistle (2 Peter ii. 13, 15), and nowhere else in the New Testament. The English version conceals this similarity, but in the original the resemblance is very noteworthy. So the word for "punishing,"



in Acts iv. 21 (a narrative certainly supplied by St. Peter), is the same as in 2 Peter ii. 9, and does not occur again. Turning to the Gospels, we know that St. Mark was called the "interpreter" of St. Peter. It is therefore worth notice that the word for "giving" in Mark xv. 45, is found nowhere else but in 2 Peter i. 3; the word for "toiling" in rowing only in Mark vi. 48 and 2 Peter ii. 7, 8; and though "storms" are mentioned often enough in the New Testament, yet the word in the original of Mark iv. 37 is only found again in 2 Peter ii. 17. Looking then to the resemblances in language in the two Epistles, and the coincidences found in the second of them with words which are St. Peter's in the Acts, and most probably his in St. Mark's Gospel (examples of which could be largely added), we find something to warrant us in accepting the writer of the second Epistle for what he himself claims to be.

There is another form of evidence which goes to prove that the letter is of the date which it professes to be. It deals with the same subjects exactly in the same way as St. Paul does. It speaks as he speaks, of the "ever growing knowledge" (*ἐπίγνωσις*), of misleading "fables," of the "covetousness" of false teachers, of their vain "promises of liberty," of the end for which

God's long-suffering was displayed, of the heresies "privily brought in by lying brethren," and indeed the whole position assumed by St. Peter towards heretical teaching is exactly the counterpart of that held by his brother apostle, and utterly different from that which would have been taken by a writer of the late date to which objectors would relegate this Epistle

There are also many points in which the writer reverts indirectly to the language and acts of Jesus, as would only be done by one who wrote with personal knowledge. Such expressions as "Gird up the loins of your mind," "Feed the flock of God which is among you," "Commit the keeping of your souls to God," all fall from the writer in the most natural way, yet all carry us back in a moment to the Lord's words from which they are suggested, while the account of our Lord's sufferings contains, in the original Greek (ii. 19-24), descriptive touches which could hardly have come from any but one who had seen the mangled body after the Crucifixion. Thus the writer's language is that of other New Testament writers at the date he professes to be writing, and his naturalness in allusions bespeaks the truth of what he states. His relation to St. Jude will be considered when we speak of that Epistle.

In spite then of the doubts expressed in early times, since we see this letter was accepted as canonical by the council of Laodicæa, and as its teaching accords with that of the Gospels and Epistles, as its view of the Christian Church is in harmony with other writings of the Apostolic age, and as it fits into its place among the canonical Scriptures, while its language, allusions, and style, have much which mark it as St. Peter's, we gladly receive it as his, feeling sure that evidence, which we do not possess, convinced the Fathers of old that they were right in assigning it to him whose work it claims to be.

Its contents may be summed up thus: Writing to those who have received the like precious faith with himself, the Apostle urges them to labour that they may advance in holiness. Such growth increases men's knowledge of Christ, and those who do not so grow are blind, and fall back from their former state of blessing. Of this he would now put them in mind, for he will soon be taken away. And he has good warrant for what he says, as he beheld our Lord's Transfiguration and was an eyewitness of His divine majesty. Beside which, he and they have the word of the prophets, who spake through the Holy Ghost. Yet words of warning are needed, for as of old, so now, false

teachers will come ; but their doom has been foreshadowed in the judgments on the world before the Flood. Nevertheless he gives marks by which these deceivers may be known ; their lawlessness, their self-indulgence, their lying promises. "I write to you" (he continues), "because the danger is near. The scoffers will come and ask, Where is the promise of Christ's appearance ? Do not follow nor be like them, nor count God slack because He does not strike down sinners at once. He is long-suffering, but His day will come ; therefore walk in all holy conversation. We Christians look for a new heaven and a new earth : let us make ourselves fit for them. God's long-suffering is meant, as St. Paul teaches, for man's salvation, but men wrest that Apostle's words to their own destruction. Being warned, fall ye not away, but grow in grace and in the knowledge of Christ, to whom be all the glory."

(d) *The First Epistle of St. John.*

THAT the first Epistle of St. John was the writing of the "beloved disciple," and known as such in the Church from the earliest times, we have abundant evidence from the days of the Apostolic Fathers downwards. And the language of the Epistle bespeaks its origin. It is

the doctrinal outcome of the fourth Gospel, and couched very often in the same words as the discourses of Christ which St. John has recorded. There are between thirty and forty passages in this short letter which are virtually quotations from the Gospel. And yet they are used in such a way as only the author of both could have employed them. The one is not a patchwork compilation from the other, but is instinct with life, and with a practical application of the Gospel history to refute errors which rose in the Apostolic age, and are likely to rise again.

All tradition unites in the statement that the latter years of St. John's life were passed at Ephesus, and his connection with that city and the rest of proconsular Asia may be assumed from the opening chapters of the Apocalypse. Whether that work be his or not, it is written by one who knew, and was aware that his readers knew, of St. John's authority among the "Churches of Asia." It is therefore most likely that this Epistle was written in Ephesus. That city was a great meeting-point of Greek philosophy with Oriental mysticism. Even the great goddess and her worship were of Eastern origin, yet called by the name of a Greek divinity. In such a place it was most probable that the erroneous teaching, which we know in

a later time strove to graft itself on Christianity, would make its appearance. This false doctrine shewed itself mainly in two ways. First, in teaching that the world was under the influence and power of two great principles—one of light, the other of darkness—and that between them there was perpetual conflict, and from the latter was the origin of evil. Besides this, the heretical teachers held wrong opinions on the Incarnation, teaching that the assumption of humanity by the Christ was only in appearance, either explaining that his body was merely a phantom, or that the union between the Divine and human subsisted only for a time, the Godhead entering into Jesus at His baptism but departing from Him before the Crucifixion. Against elementary stages of these errors the Epistle of St. John is directed, not in the manner of controversy, but by the assertion of the true doctrine concerning God and Christ, the great lessons being—"God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all;" "He that doeth sin is of the devil, whose works the Son of God was manifested to destroy;" "Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God." The statement of these truths, and of their practical operation on the lives of men, is St. John's method of combating the rising error.

The Apostle may be supposed to have written such a letter for circulation among all the Churches of Asia, while still occupying his place in Ephesus. It would thus be meant as a sort of encyclical epistle, and in this way the absence of any name or salutation might be accounted for. But perhaps that feature of the Epistle is rather due to the character of St. John than to anything else. He shews the same desire to be unnamed in his Gospel, and his habit of retiring into the background is well illustrated in the Acts, by the description of his share in the first preaching at Jerusalem. He is there side by side with St. Peter, but ever his fellow-disciple comes to the front. His life throughout is a comment on the words of the Gospel, "He came first to the sepulchre, yet went he not in."

We may gather from the contents of the Epistle that Jewish opposition to the Gospel was not any longer an object of dread. Therefore we conclude that Jerusalem had been destroyed before this letter was written. But yet active persecution against Christians is not dreaded, so that the reign of Domitian was not over. Thus the date of the Epistle is after A.D. 70, and probably before A.D. 90, though it was not written immediately after the destruction of the Holy City, or we should have had some



allusion to that event so important in the story of the progress of Christianity. A date very near A.D. 90 seems the most natural point to which to assign it.

There is one verse (v. 7) of the Epistle as it stands in our Bibles, which does not belong to the text. The verse, with that which follows it, should read, "There are three that bear witness, the Spirit and the water and the blood," all the other words which appear in the A.V. being only a gloss and interfering with the reasoning. The Apostle has been speaking in verse 6 of the water and the blood by which Christ came, and of the Spirit that beareth witness thereto, and he emphasizes this by their repetition. The words which are by the Rev. Ver. properly rejected from the sacred text, viz. "in heaven, the Father, the Word and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one, and there are three that bear witness in the earth," are known as the text of "the three heavenly witnesses." They cannot be found in any MS. of an earlier date than the 8th century. They have been introduced from some marginal notes made in illustration of the text, but have no warrant from the original authorities, and spoil the sequence of the reasoning. Sir Isaac Newton's remark on the passage as it stands in our Bibles was,

“Let them make good sense of it who are able ; for my part, I can make none.”

The contents of the Epistle may be briefly sketched thus: (1) The introduction. “We declare unto you that which we have seen of the Word of life, and this we do that ye, like us, may have fellowship with the Father and the Son, and thus attain unto fulness of joy. (2) Our message is, ‘God is light,’ and those who have fellowship with Him must walk in the light, and then they become cleansed from sin by the blood of Jesus. He is our advocate with the Father, and the propitiation for our sins, and for those of all the world. None can know Christ, who do not strive to keep His commandments, and walk after Him. The commandment which I give you is not new, and yet in a sense it is new. It is a commandment to live a life of brotherly love. This was taught you from the first, but has received a new force from the life of Christ. He that loveth not his brother is still walking in darkness.”

Then, after enumerating those classes of persons to whom he writes, the Apostle declares unto them the things which they must not love, if they would walk in the light ; and after this proceeds to point out how the darkness is manifested by the presence of Antichrists, who deny

the Son, and therefore have no share in the Father.

(3) The next part of the message is "God is love," and by doing righteousness men may be called His sons. This knowledge should lead men to purify their lives; for those who sin are not sons of God, but of the devil. And the test of doing righteousness is love of the brethren, not love in word, but in deed and in truth. Through this love we approach the blessedness of sonship. But not every spirit is the result of this sonship, therefore they should be tried. Perfect love is the best test. If that be not present, the spirit cannot be of God. And love itself is tested by faith. To be born of God, we must believe that Jesus is the Son of God. Then, in a conclusion which recapitulates the previous argument, and after a solemn warning, the letter closes with a sentence very fit to be addressed to dwellers in the city of Ephesus, "Guard yourselves from idols."

*(e,f) The Second and Third Epistles of St. John.*

FOR the second and third Epistles of St. John, there is not much external evidence to be produced, for their brevity made them less likely to be quoted or alluded to by the early Christian writers. But the second is alluded to in the

Muratorian Canon, and Dionysius, the disciple of Origen, makes definite allusion to the third.

They are without a name, in which point they resemble the first Epistle, and they also abound in forms common to that Epistle. There is therefore no reason for disregarding the tradition which ascribes them to St. John, and they were probably written from Ephesus.

In the second, the writer, who is apparently staying in a place where he is brought into contact with some of the children of her to whom he writes, expresses his joy over the faith which is manifest in them, and adds a solemn warning against those teachers who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. He hopes soon to see her to whom he writes, and sends her the greetings of another Christian sister.

The third Epistle is addressed to Gaius the beloved, to whom the Apostle wishes all prosperity, and tells of his own joy at hearing that he walks still in the truth. The kindness which Gaius has shewn to Christian strangers is a good work. These men are gone forth for the sake of God's name; to welcome them is to become fellow-workers with the truth. The conduct of Diotrephes is the opposite of this, and is to be avoided. The Apostle, when he comes, will not forget his deeds. He loves

pre-eminence, and, while he does not himself receive the brethren, would hinder those who are willing to do so. Demetrius (the Apostle adds, perhaps speaking of the messenger who carried the letter) is well spoken of by all men, and I give my witness with the rest. Then, as hoping to see Gaius ere long, while sending his own and his friends' salutations to the Christian body of which Gaius was a member, the writer closes with the briefest prayer for peace.

(g) *The Epistle of St. Jude.*

THE writer of the Epistle of St. Jude calls himself only Jude, the brother of James, and does not name himself an Apostle. He was probably therefore the brother of that well-known James, the Bishop of Jerusalem, and so one of the "Lord's brethren." He seems to state expressly that he was not one of the Apostles; for he writes (ver. 17), "Remember ye the words which have been spoken before by the Apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ, how that *they* said unto you," etc. And he, like St. James, refrained from mentioning his close connection with Jesus, because he did not desire to lay stress on a position which none of the other disciples could claim, and this feeling would be the stronger because for a long time the "brethren of the

Lord" had not believed in Him, and this may be the reason why both James and Jude call themselves *bondservants* of Jesus Christ.

The Epistle bears evidence that it was written for Christians who had been Jews; for all the illustrations used in it are such as would be employed only by a Jew writing for Jews. The deliverance from Egypt, the fallen angels, Sodom and Gomorrah, Michael's contention with Satan, the allusions to Cain, Balaam, and Korah, shew an acquaintance in the writer, and presumed on in the readers, not only with Jewish Scripture, but with tradition also.

This Epistle was by many classed among the doubtful portions (*antilegomena*) of the New Testament writings. Yet the evidence to be derived from quotations in the Fathers is that it was known in Italy and the Churches of Northern Africa, as well as in Alexandria, by the middle or in the latter half of the second century, though its acceptance in the East was not general till the beginning of the fourth century. It appears however, from a statement of Jerome, that the chief reason why it won its way to acceptance so late was that it contains a quotation "from the book of Enoch, which is apocryphal."

As might be expected in so brief a letter,

there is very little to guide us to the date when it was written. Yet the writer exhorts his readers to remember the words which *have been spoken* by the Apostles, and the language in the original here implies something pronounced and heard directly. Therefore we may suppose that those for whom the letter was intended had listened to the preaching of some of the twelve. And this is confirmed by what is said in another verse: "Remember how they *said to you*." As we know from Eusebius that St. Jude was dead before the time of Domitian, we are constrained to date the letter previous to A.D. 80, and it may have been written as early as A.D. 65, though it seems most natural to conclude that it was written after the second Epistle of St. Peter. It is generally admitted that one of these writers knew of the work of the other, or else that they were drawing their illustrations from a common source, viz., some previously existing Jewish writing. But in the Epistle of St. Peter it is said (ii. 1), "There *shall be* false teachers, who *shall* privily bring in heresies," etc., and elsewhere, "scoffers *shall* come," while St. Jude's language refers to a different time. He says the evil exists, and is not still to come. "There *are certain men crept in* un-awares." With him the "spots" in the "feasts of



charity" already exist, and he beholds the false teachers "pasturing themselves without fear."

And in the characters portrayed there is an advance in St. Jude upon the description given by St. Peter. The latter speaks of "teachers," men who "with feigned words make merchandise of you," who "beguile unstable souls." But St. Jude's picture is painted in much darker colours. There is no mention of the offenders as teachers; they are simply degraded in their lives by wicked lusts, they "turn the grace of God into lasciviousness," they walk after their own lusts," they "are sensual," and "what they know naturally in those things they corrupt themselves." Thus the letter of St. Jude appears to have been written when evil lessons had brought forth their fruit in evil lives.

Moreover St. Jude seems to have expanded the illustrations of St. Peter, so that they apply more definitely to the sensual excesses against which he had to write. This will be specially apparent on reading what is said about the overthrow of the cities of the plain (2 Pet. ii. 6, and Jude 7). St. Jude charges his picture more deeply, because he has in his mind a scene of a grosser character. The sinners of whom he speaks glory in their wickedness. Under the public gaze they have no feeling of shame;

they are doubly dead, and it is *for ever* that for them the blackness of darkness is reserved. Some time then must have passed by before the *teachers* of St. Peter had developed into the hopeless condition pictured by St. Jude.

The Epistle opens with a salutation and invocation of blessing on those addressed. The writer was minded to have sent them a letter dealing with the general doctrines of the Christian faith, but the existence of false teachers calls for a prompt and special Epistle. He reminds his readers that among those who came up from Egypt there were faithless men whom God destroyed, that even angels which sinned are kept in bonds for judgment, while the overthrow of the cities of the plain is a warning for such sinners for all time. Yet now there have arisen ungodly men, who commit the like gross sins, who despise authority, and give free rein to their animal nature. Continuing his description, he classes these sinners with Cain, Balaam, and Korah; they are foul stains on the Christian community, and shamelessly make public their own disgrace. Enoch prophesied of such offenders and their end. Then the writer turns to exhortation. Such mockers had been foretold by the Apostles, now they have appeared. Let the faithful hold firm to the end, praying

and waiting for the mercy of Christ. Next he directs how the offenders are to be treated,<sup>1</sup> and with a solemn ascription brings his brief letter to an end.

The Book of Enoch, from which a quotation is made in the Epistle, exists now only in an Æthiopic version; but it was current in the early Christian centuries in Greek, and we may almost certainly assume that it was in Greek that Tertullian and Augustine (who speak of it) knew it. The original may have been in some Hebrew dialect; and though in the course of time additions may have been made to it, recent investigations have shewn that there is no satisfactory reason for disbelieving that the groundwork of the book existed in the times of our Lord, and that from this St. Jude made his quotation.

<sup>1</sup> In verses 22-23 there is some uncertainty about the Greek text. - That which seems to have most authority would be rendered as in the Rev. Ver. "And on some have mercy, who are in doubt; and on some save, snatching them out of the fire; and on some have mercy with fear, hating even the garment spotted by the flesh." Thus the sinners for whose salvation Christians are to labour are put in three classes, each being in a worse state than the former. First, the waverers; second, those who are all but in the fire of sin; third, those who are so far gone that it is only great love for souls that will prompt men to go through the danger of trying to rescue them.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE REVELATION OF ST. JOHN.

THIS book, sometimes called the "Apocalypse," from the Greek word signifying "revelation," differs in the character of its contents from all other books of the New Testament. The rest contain history, doctrinal teaching, and exhortation; the Revelation is the sole prophetic book of the Christian canon. It claims to be the work of a certain John, whom the evidence, both internal and external, attests to have been the "beloved disciple." That he should name himself simply John shews that he was aware that he would be recognised among Christians as the most celebrated bearer of that name in the time when he lived; while the address to the seven Churches of Asia is what would be natural in one who had taken Ephesus for the scene of his apostolic labours. Moreover the writer calls himself, like the rest of the Apostles, a bondservant of Jesus, says that he is bearing record of the Word of God, and of the testi-

mony of Jesus Christ, even of all things that he had seen. Language could scarcely indicate more clearly that this John is one who "from the beginning was an eye-witness and minister of the Word."

Accordingly, though some doubts about the authorship were raised, even in very early times (Eus., *H. E.*, vii. 25), the general testimony of antiquity has assigned this book to the author of the fourth Gospel. Beginning in the early part of the second century with Papias, Bishop of Hierapolis, who was a friend of Polycarp, St. John's disciple, and who maintained the Divine inspiration of the Apocalypse, and commented upon some part of it, the list of witnesses is very large down to the time when this book was inserted in the Canon in the middle of the fourth century. Justin Martyr, who lived A.D. 150, says, "Moreover also among us a man named John, one of the Apostles of Christ, prophesied in a revelation made to him that those who have believed on our Christ shall spend a thousand years in Jerusalem." At the time when Justin was martyred, Dionysius appears to have been Bishop of Corinth, and he speaks of "the woe appointed for those who take away some things and add others [to the Scriptures]," a manifest

allusion to Apoc. xxii. 18. Then the Revelation is included in the Canon of Muratori (A.D. 170), and there it is expressly ascribed to St. John ; and at the same date Melito of Sardis wrote a treatise on the book, which shews that by that time it was circulated and accepted as the work of the Apostle St. John. Such witnesses might be cited through the whole time before the settlement of the Canon, but it will be enough to mention that Irenæus not only quotes the text of the book, but speaks of the oral testimony thereto of the very persons who had seen St. John face to face ; and in a letter written by the Christians of Lyons and Vienne (A.D. 171), over whom Irenæus became bishop, the Apocalypse (xxii. 11) is directly referred to, and the allusion is prefaced by the expression "that the Scripture might be fulfilled." Thus to the opinion of very early antiquity, both about the author of the book and its scriptural character, we have evidence as strong as could be desired. And though in the council of Laodicæa the Apocalypse is not mentioned in the Canon, this is because the list there given is expressly defined as of "those books which were read in the churches," to which use, from the nature of its contents, this book was not deemed well adapted. Yet by the council of

Carthage, about thirty years later, it is specially noticed as the work of St. John.

When we approach the question of date, it is not without much difficulty that we can come to a conclusion where and when the Apocalypse was written. The language of Irenæus is very express, that "the Revelation was seen no long time since, but almost in our own generation, towards the end of the reign of Domitian" (A.D. 96); and Eusebius quotes the same writer as saying, "As it is reported, John, at once Apostle and Evangelist, while still continuing in life, was condemned to dwell in the island of Patmos, on account of the testimony which he bore to the Divine Word." To this statement, Eusebius adds that, "after Domitian's death, the Apostle, coming back from his exile in the island, resumed his residence at Ephesus." This is the prevailing opinion of antiquity, and thus it has been inferred that the Apocalypse was written either in Patmos, or after the return to Ephesus, and hence that its date must be fixed after A.D. 96.

But in spite of this very definite evidence from old times, we cannot help seeing, as we read the book itself, that it bears the stamp of an earlier date, and there are some witnesses from antiquity who place the exile of St. John



much earlier than the reign of Domitian. Theophylact tells us that St. John was in Patmos thirty-two years after the Ascension, and in the preface to the Syriac version of the Apocalypse we read that he was banished thither by the Emperor Nero; so that the external testimony is not entirely accordant. Looking, then, at the internal evidence, it seems very improbable that the writer would have said (xi. 2), "The holy city shall they [the Gentiles] tread under foot forty and two months," if, at the time when he was writing, Jerusalem had been already destroyed. And this opinion is strengthened when we see that the city which is to come down from heaven is to be "a new Jerusalem," and that the Lamb is to stand on Mount Sion (xiv. 1), as a prelude to the preaching of the Gospel to every nation and kindred and tongue and people. The city which the writer knew, and which God had chosen to place His name there, was still, to St. John at this time, the place whence "the Word of the Lord should go forth, and where the mountain of the Lord's house was to be established in the top of the mountains." And in harmony with this notion of its composition before the overthrow of Jerusalem, the whole book abounds with Old Testament imagery, and (with the

exception of the Temple) looks forward to the preservation of much of the Old Testament economy. The description of the Son of Man (i. 12-16) is a reproduction of the visions of Ezekiel and Daniel, and He is afterwards spoken of (iii. 7) as "He that hath the key of David." The same remark applies also to the vision of God enthroned, and surrounded by the elders and the mystic beasts. So, too, those who are sealed as the servants of God are of all the tribes of the children of Israel, while the offence of some of the sinners in the Asiatic Churches is that "they say they are Jews while they are not, but are the synagogue of Satan."

Then the view which the writer holds concerning the near approach of our Lord's coming harmonizes entirely with the opinions prevalent in the first years of the Christian Church, but which were modified in the minds of all the New Testament writers as time went on, and the character of which was changed after the overthrow of the Holy City. That one "coming" of Christ made clearer the Spirit's lessons about the further coming for which men should look. But in the Apocalypse that first event is still in the future. "The time is at hand." "Behold, He cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced

Him." The suddenness and unexpected character of the coming of the Son of Man "as a thief in the night," a description found in the Synoptic Gospels, but not in St. John, is constantly before the eyes of the writer of the Apocalypse (iii. 3 ; xvi. 5), while the "Blessed is he that watcheth" is an exact echo of St. Luke's language (xii. 37), "Blessed are those servants whom the Lord, when He cometh, shall find watching." This tone is sustained throughout the whole Book of Revelation ; and as though this subject formed the most important part of the message, the writer closes with the solemn repetition, "He which testifieth these things saith, Behold, I come quickly," and the prayer of the Apostle to whom the vision is vouchsafed is, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

How different this expectation of "things which must shortly come to pass" upon the earth is from that coming of which the same John writes in the Gospel, when the earthly manifestations of Christ's earlier coming were past, and through heaven-sent illumination their lesson had been made clear! In the Gospel the "coming" speaks not to Jews only, but to all the world. The departed Lord has gone into heaven, and will come again to receive His chosen ones unto Himself, and they, in His

absence, shall be strengthened by the Comforter. Christ's kingdom, and the union of Christians with Him, shall be through the sanctification of the Spirit. Christ will dwell in His Church, but His coming is not to be pictured by external visitations such as are spoken of in the Apocalypse, nor is His victory merely as the lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David. The early language of the New Testament times, which speaks of signs in the sun and in the moon and in the stars, and upon the earth distress of nations with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring, men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking for those things which are coming upon the earth, all finds its parallel in the Revelation, and the whole conception of the book bespeaks a time before Judaism was scattered by the armies of Rome. Michael and his angels carry on the war in heaven (xii. 7); those who are victorious over the beast sing the song of Moses, the servant of God (xv. 3); and the typical names of the nations that are led astray are "Gog and Magog," names drawn from Ezekiel, and oft used in Jewish literature to describe those peoples who should rise up to oppose the kingdom of the Messiah; while the Gentile nations are, as of old, to be God's ministers for the punishment (xi. 2) of His offending people.

It should be noticed also that the Apocalypse, like the earlier Gospels, dwells on the human side of Christ's life rather than the Divine. He is first presented as "one like unto the Son of Man;" He now liveth, but has died like man; He hath the key of David, and it is as the representative of mankind that He opens the book sealed with seven seals; His praise is sung as the Lamb that was slain, and who by His blood redeemed men unto God; and He is to be the Judge who shall give to every man according to his work. He is throughout proclaimed as the root and offspring of David. But of the doctrine of His eternal Sonship, and of His co-existence with the Father, and of the whole Divine side of the Saviour's life, so fully set forth in the fourth Gospel, the Revelation gives but the faintest glimpses, such as may be gathered in the Synoptists, who wrote before the Christian body had been strengthened by the Holy Ghost to accept and set forth the majesty of the Lord in all its fulness.

Yet there is much in the language which proclaims the writer of the Apocalypse and of the fourth Gospel to be the same person. With both the Christ is "the Word" of God; both speak of Him as "the Lamb," and as "the Shepherd;" both use like language of Him as "the

Bridegroom," and the books are marked by the employment of similar images ; thus the hidden food, bread or manna, and the living water are spoken of in the same way, and in both books we have the thought, "the harvest of the earth is ripe," used with precisely the same import. Besides these resemblances, the books shew a fondness in the writer for certain words ; thus "witness," "sign," "to overcome," "to keep God's word," "to dwell," or "tabernacle," are only a few out of many expressions which equally stand forth in both the Gospel and the Revelation, and stamp them as coming from the same hand.

Yet, in spite of the tradition about the date of St. John's exile, and the positive language of Irenæus, the historic setting of the book of the Revelation, as well as the incomplete view which it gives of Christ's work and kingdom, and the great prominence assigned to the Jewish ceremonial and economy in depicting the development of Christianity, make it seem more reasonable to place the date of its writing anterior to the overthrow of the Holy City and the Jewish polity, and its fitting place among the Christian books appears to be between the first three Gospels and the fourth.

It has been urged as an objection against this

early date, that St. Paul's labours among the Churches in Asia only terminated about A.D. 60, and that the condition of those Churches as portrayed in the Apocalypse shews a greater relapse than would be likely to have occurred in less than ten years. But St. Paul himself, a man well able to read the signs of the times, testified to the elders of Ephesus (Acts xx. 29), on his departure from them, "I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch." And his experience of the Galatian Churches in a less period than ten years compels him to address them (Gal. i. 6), "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel." It is therefore impossible to affirm any conclusion about the date of the Apocalypse from the picture presented in it before A.D. 70 of some of the Churches to which St. Paul had given his charge in his last journey through Asia.

As the Apocalypse is a sort of circular letter addressed to the seven Churches by the Spirit through St. John, it may very well have been written from one of the Churches named in it,



and as Ephesus stands first in the list of the seven, and the Apostle was more closely connected with that Church than with the rest, there is no need to question the tradition which states that it was written from Ephesus.

The first three verses may be taken as the title of the book, which is followed by St. John's salutation to the Churches, and an account of the way in which the visions he is to record were given to him in Patmos by "one like the Son of Man," who bade him write the things here revealed, which are expressly named things which are, and things which shall be hereafter, to the seven Churches. After this (ii., iii.) follow the letters to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicæa, each with its special message of approval or of warning, the warnings being the more abundant, and the whole picture shewing that the religion of Jesus was at that time in conflict with a false Judaism, the evil influence of which St. John emphasizes by naming its adherents "the synagogue of Satan." The speaker in each epistle is the Son of Man, and at its close each letter is called "the Spirit's message to Churches."

The next section of the Revelation (iv. to xi.) leaves particular Churches, and is addressed to the Church universal. The Apostle in his

vision beholds God on His throne in heaven, surrounded by the elders and the mystic beasts, and receiving their adoration, which rests not day and night. In God's right hand is a book with seven seals, which none could open but the Lamb that had been slain. To Him, as to God, the beasts and elders pay their worship, and sing a new song in praise of the Redeemer. Each seal in turn is broken, and the Apostle beholds (1) one sitting on a white horse, and going forth conquering and to conquer ; (2) one on a red horse, with power to take peace away from the earth ; (3) one on a black horse, holding balances in his hand, and indicative of famine ; (4) a pale horse, whose rider was Death, with Hell for his attendant ; (5) under the altar the souls of the martyrs ; (6) an earthquake, followed by signs in heaven and commotion on the earth, because the day of God's wrath is near. But all the terrors portended by the previous visions are stayed until the sealing of the servants of God is finished. Then (7) the last seal is opened ; and, after a silence in heaven, the seven angels of God go forth with trumpets, and at the sound of the first trumpet hail and fire fall upon the earth, and destroy much of it ; at the second trumpet a fiery mountain is rolled into the sea, by which

both the fish in the sea and the ships upon it are widely destroyed ; the third sound heralds the fall of a star from heaven, which makes the waters of the earth bitter and deadly ; at the blast of the fourth angel the sun, the moon, and the stars are smitten, and a cry of woe is raised in heaven because of the still greater judgments which are yet to come upon the world. When the fifth angel sounded, another star fell from heaven, and opened the bottomless pit, from which issued, amid the smoke, locusts, which are sent to torment the men that are not sealed, so that they shall desire to die, yet death shall flee from them. This army, forming the first woe, are under the leading of their king, Apollyon. At the sounding of the sixth trumpet, four angels, which had been bound, are loosed, and they, with their host, through the fire and smoke and brimstone coming from their mouths, destroyed the third part of the men, yet the rest repented not of their evil. Then from heaven appears a mighty angel holding a book, and proclaiming that time shall be no longer. He gives the Apostle the book to eat, and afterwards commands him to measure the Temple and its worshippers ; but the Court of the Gentiles is not to be measured, for unto them is given up the Holy

City, to be trodden under foot. Then is described the prophesying of God's two witnesses, who yet shall be destroyed by the beast that cometh up out of the bottomless pit; and after men have triumphed over the death of these prophets, whose words were their torment, the Spirit of life from God shall enter into them and they shall live again and ascend into heaven. This in his vision the writer sees to come to pass, and their ascension was followed by an earthquake, which terrified men so that they gave glory to the God of heaven. Afterwards the seventh trumpet sounds, and the reign of Christ is proclaimed, and that the time has come for judgment.

The rest of the book is occupied with visions which represent the conflicts of the Church of Christ with the powers of evil under various figures, and referring, as it seems, to various times. First (xii.), there appears a woman clothed with the sun, and while she travails in birth a dragon with seven heads and ten horns is ready to devour her child as soon as it shall be born. To save it from such destruction the man-child, who is to rule all nations with a rod of iron, is caught up to the throne of God, while Michael and his angels fight against the dragon and prevail, so that he is cast down to the

earth, where he persecuted the woman who had brought forth the child. The woman is delivered, but the dragon continues to make war with her seed.

The next vision (xiii.) is of a beast with seven heads and ten horns, to whom the dragon gave his power and seat and authority; and he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God. Then there arose a second beast, who caused the earth and them that dwell therein to worship the first beast, and to make an image unto him, and those who would not worship the image were to be killed. He caused all men everywhere to bear the mark, or the name, or the number of the name of the beast; and the number is six hundred threescore and six.

In the next chapter (xiv.) the vision is of the Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and about Him those who have His Father's name in their foreheads; these are without fault before the throne of God. Then from the midst of heaven came forth one angel to preach the everlasting Gospel, another proclaiming the fall of Babylon, and a third pronouncing the judgment that should come on those that worship the beast and his image. Proclamation is also made from heaven that the harvest of the world is ripe, and straightway the vine of the earth is gathered

and cast into the winepress of the wrath of God.

The chapters from xv. to xix. are largely occupied with the judgment of Babylon, which is pictured as a harlot drunken with the blood of the saints. The vision is opened by seven angels who bear the last seven plagues, and those who have overcome the beast are seen standing on a sea of glass, and singing the songs of Moses and of the Lamb. The angels pour out each their vial, the first on the earth, when there falls a sore upon those who had worshipped the beast; the second vial turns the sea into blood; the third destroys the rivers in like manner; the fourth vial was poured on the sun, and all men were scorched with his fire; the fifth was poured upon the seat where the beast had sat, and the sixth upon the river Euphrates. Then are beheld the spirits of devils who go forth to gather the kings of the earth to the battle of that great day of God Almighty in the place called Har-Magedon. At the pouring out of the seventh vial, great Babylon came in remembrance before God, that He might make her drink the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath. Then there is set before the seer the vision, first, of the harlot Babylon in all her splendour, and an explanation

is given to him which connects this figurative woman with the beast that came forth from the bottomless pit, and he is shewn how the powers, of which the horns of the beast are emblems, make war upon the Lamb, but are overcome. It is also told him that the woman is "that great city which reigneth over the kings of the earth." Then an angel publishes the fall of Babylon, while the people of God are exhorted to flee from the midst of her. The kings of the earth and the merchants are loud in their wail over her, but heaven and the apostles and prophets are called on to rejoice at her overthrow, because in her was found the blood of the prophets, the saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth. After this the praise of God is sung in heaven because He hath thus avenged the blood of His saints; for now the marriage of the Lamb is come, and blessed are all they that are called to the marriage supper. Next heaven is opened, and there appears a white horse, whose rider is called "Faithful and true," and also "the Word of God," while on His vesture and on His thigh a name is written, "King of kings and Lord of lords." An angel cries unto all the fowls of the heaven to come and devour, for there is a great slaughter by the sword of Him that sitteth on the horse,



while the beast and the false prophet are cast into the lake of fire.

The next chapter (xx.) reveals how Satan shall be bound for a thousand years, after which shall come the first resurrection, and those who have part therein shall for a thousand years be priests of God, and reign with Christ. After this Satan is again to be loosed, and shall deceive the nations, though in the end he shall be bound and cast into the lake of fire and brimstone. Then shall come the general resurrection and the judgment day.

Next follows (xxi. 1 to xxii. 7) a vision of the New Jerusalem coming down in glory out of heaven, and voices from heaven proclaim that now God has made His tabernacle among men. This new Jerusalem is the bride, the Lamb's wife. And her grandeur is described as that of a magnificent city where dwelt the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb, while the glory of God was the light thereof, and into it entered nothing that could defile. Through the city flowed the river of the water of life, and in the midst of her grew the tree of life, whose fruit was for the healing of the nations. There, with God as their light, His servants shall reign for ever and ever.

St. John, who had seen these visions, would

(xxii. 8-20) have worshipped the angel that shewed them unto him, but was forbidden, and told that the time for the fulfilment of all that he had seen was near, and that what had been revealed was true, neither should any man take from or add to the words of this book. The portion of him that doeth so will God take away out of the book of life.

In the interpretation of these prophetic visions Christians have evinced from the earliest times the deepest interest.<sup>1</sup> For some centuries, however, of the first portion of our era, no regular scheme was elaborated for arranging and explaining the revelations which St. John had received. Rome was identified with Babylon, it is true, but this name had before been given by Jews to the imperial city, and the sufferings which both Jews and Christians experienced from Roman rule made the application a natural one. The expectation, however, of the speedy coming of Christ mainly absorbed men's thoughts, and the reign of Antichrist, the millennium, and the day of judgment were subjects on which these revelations were

<sup>1</sup> It is, however, very remarkable that though much read and studied in Western Christendom, the Apocalypse was a neglected book in the Churches of the East for many centuries.

accepted, rather as general representations of what God had been pleased to make known concerning the future of Christ's Church, than as statements which might be subjected to definite chronological arrangement. This was the disposition of most men towards the Apocalypse while Christianity was struggling against heresy and heathenism. But when she had attained a firmer footing in the West as well as in the East, and the faith of Christ was professed by the rulers of the world, the early conceptions about the fulfilment of these predictions faded from men's minds, and they no longer centered their thoughts upon a spiritual kingdom, in which Christ with His saints would speedily come to reign upon the earth, but began to look for the accomplishment of what had been revealed in the spread of the Christian religion among the kingdoms of the world. While the Roman Empire prospered, the Christians who meditated on these things restricted their application of the Apocalypse in great part to Western Christendom, a course into which very many subsequent commentators have been betrayed. Thus, the spread of Roman sway under Christian princes was looked upon as the divinely appointed channel for the extension of Christianity. Afterwards,

as the decline of Rome came about, interpretations were framed in which the invaders of the empire, heretics and barbarians, were identified with those powers of evil against which it had been shewn to St. John that Christ's Church would have to contend. As further time went on, and instead of the imperial power the papal authority became paramount in the West, and when that authority encroached everywhere and became intolerable, men declared once again that Rome was intended by the apocalyptic Babylon, and that the Pope was the fulfilment of the vision of Antichrist.

In consequence of the movements which preceded the Reformation, a degree of greater definiteness was given to the schemes of interpretation applied to the Book of Revelation, and the historical application of the figures which it contains was a fruitful field of labour from the time of Wycliffe downward, and has indeed been so from that date to our own, the spirit of interpretation being more active at some periods (*e.g.* in the stirring events which attended on the French Revolution) than at others. The historical interpreters have generally regarded this solemn book as giving a history of the Church of Christ down to the end of the world, only differing from one another as to whether

the several series of visions should be looked upon as one successive of the other, or whether they refer to events which may be going on side by side. There has, however, been much difference of opinion as to the significance and application of the various signs, on which wide field our limited space forbids us to enter. We can only draw the conclusion from the abundance of applications that have been discovered, that the full insight into a great deal that is revealed has not yet been reached, and that, as in history, events repeat themselves, so to God's prophecy there may be several lower historical fulfilments of a partial kind before the end is reached, which He alone could see from the beginning. It should be also remarked that the historical interpreters of the Apocalypse have, from the engrossing nature of the points to which their special inquiries attracted them, been prone to seek the solution of what is revealed in the history of a single limited section of the Christian world, and in the narrow space occupied by one exciting period of Church history, losing sight perhaps in some degree of the fact that as the Church of Christ is to be victorious over the whole world, so the conflicts through which she has to pass may be carried on in other theatres than Europe.

But beside the historical method of interpretation, there have arisen two other classes of expositors, one of which, restricting the vision of the writer to the days in which he lived, and allowing him no more gifts than a wise skill in foreseeing the course which events were taking, has maintained that all the troubles and struggles of which he spake had reference to Judaism and the Roman Empire, and the hindrances which both these were likely to cast in the way of any advance of the Christian faith. Such men hold that the Revelation has long ago been accomplished, and that our study should be confined to gathering the method of its fulfilment by examination of the events of the first and second centuries.

On the opposite extreme stand those who cannot be called interpreters, but who hold that there will be no fulfilment of these visions till the last coming of Christ is nigh at hand. Some of these go so far as to declare that the seven Churches of Asia have not yet arisen, while even those who admit that the first three chapters of our book may have historical reference, yet relegate the accomplishment of all beside to the far distant future.

Now for endeavouring to estimate the character of any scheme of interpretation applied

to the New Testament Apocalypse, we seem to have our best aid in the study of those apocalyptic words of Christ Himself, left for us in the twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth chapters of St. Matthew. There, though commencing with signs which should precede the destruction of Jerusalem, and calling that event a coming of the Son of Man, our Lord yet uses this as a type of, and introduction to, that greater coming when He shall appear in glory, and all His holy angels with Him. With this for our guide, we should be unwilling to accept the exposition of those who hold that the events of which St. John was directed to speak were all accomplished in the immediate future after his book was written. That the Spirit should have employed solemn language, like that which speaks of the Son of Man on His throne of glory, of the judgment being set, and the books open, concerning matters which had to do only with the fall of Jerusalem and the fortunes of the Roman Empire, is alien to the character of Divine revelation. Nor can we think it in harmony with God's other dealings towards men, that He should give in this book nothing but a picture of what was to be looked for in the far distant future. God's revelation has been ever progressive, and has been given as



man became prepared to receive and use it. It seems therefore reasonable to accept the Christian Apocalypse as given to be a help and a warning to the Church from the time when it was first made known until its complete fulfilment shall arrive. Some "comings" of the Son of Man have, no doubt, passed by. The fall of Jerusalem He Himself has so named. And we may be permitted to recognize others in the spread of Christianity, in the barbarian inroads upon the Roman Empire, in the rise of Mohammedanism, in the darkness of the Middle Ages, in the Reformation, in the French Revolution. Each of these great events has doubtless been a coming of Christ in mercy or in judgment, and each has brought nearer the day of that greater coming which shall solve all the mystery of what St. John was permitted to behold. To read therefore in history the fulfilment of the visions is a wise employment of God's Word, and no disappointment should be felt if there be found in what we see and read only a partial accomplishment of what has been revealed. For in giving His own Apocalypse, Christ gave also the warning: "Ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars; but the end is not yet;" and said of the risings of nations, and of the famines, pestilences and earthquakes,

with which God should from time to time reveal His power upon the earth, that these were but the beginning of sorrows, while He added, concerning the great day of the Son of Man, that it should be such as all men would recognize ; for it should be as the lightning coming from the east, and shining even unto the west.

LIST OF WRITERS, EVENTS, AND WORKS  
CITED AS AUTHORITIES, WITH THEIR  
DATES.

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|                                                  |                       |
|--------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Athenagoras, a Greek Apologist . . . .           | A.D. 177              |
| Authorized Version put forth. . . . .            | 1611                  |
| Bishop's Bible . . . . .                         | 1568                  |
| Carthage, Council of (third) . . . . .           | 397                   |
| Chrysostom, Patriarch of Constantinople . . . .  | 398                   |
| Claudius Apollinaris, Bishop of Hierapolis . . . | 180                   |
| Clemens Alexandrinus . . . . .                   | 165—220               |
| Clemens Romanus . . . . .                        | <i>died about</i> 100 |
| Complutensian Polyglot published . . . . .       | 1522                  |
| Coverdale's Bible . . . . .                      | 1535                  |
| Cyril of Alexandria . . . . .                    | <i>died</i> 444       |
| Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage. . . . .             | <i>flor.</i> 250      |
| Dionysius of Alexandria . . . . .                | 245                   |
| Dionysius, Bishop of Corinth . . . . .           | 165                   |
| Erasmus, Greek Testament of, published . . .     | 1516                  |
| Eusebius, Bishop of Cæsarea (in Palestine) . .   | <i>flor.</i> 325      |
| Firmilian, Bishop of Cæsarea (in Cappadocia) .   | 256                   |
| Geneva Bible published . . . . .                 | 1557                  |
| Great Bible . . . . .                            | 1539                  |
| Hegesippus, early Church historian . . . . .     | <i>flor.</i> 160      |
| Hippolytus, Bishop of Portus . . . . .           | 220                   |
| Irenæus, Bishop of Lyons . . . . .               | <i>died</i> 202       |
| Jerome . . . . .                                 | 420                   |
| Jerusalem, Fall of . . . . .                     | 70                    |

|                                                    |                       |
|----------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Justin Martyr . . . . .                            | <i>died</i> A.D. 165  |
| Laodiceæ, Council of . . . . .                     | <i>held</i> 363       |
| Letter of Christians in Lyons and Vienne . . . . . | 171                   |
| LXX version begun probably about . . . . .         | B.C. 280              |
| Marcion, heretical writer . . . . .                | <i>flor.</i> A.D. 150 |
| Matthews' Bible published . . . . .                | 1538                  |
| Melito, Bishop of Sardis . . . . .                 | 170                   |
| Muratorian Fragment, date of . . . . .             | <i>about</i> 170      |
| Origen . . . . .                                   | 180-253               |
| Papias, Bishop of Hierapolis. . . . .              | <i>flor.</i> 120      |
| Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna . . . . .               | <i>died</i> 167       |
| Tertullian, a Presbyter of Carthage . . . . .      | 160-240               |
| Theodoret, Bishop of Cyrus in Syria . . . . .      | <i>died</i> 456       |
| Theophilus of Antioch . . . . .                    | <i>flor.</i> 180      |
| Theophylact . . . . .                              | 1077                  |
| Tyndale's New Testament first published . . . . .  | 1525                  |
| Vulgate, Clementine edition of . . . . .           | 1592                  |
| Wycliffe's Bible . . . . .                         | 1383                  |

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